

# THE GOSPEL OF DIVINE PERSONALITY

W. S. BISHOP

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THE GOSPEL OF DIVINE  
PERSONALITY

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# THE GOSPEL OF DIVINE PERSONALITY

THE SELF-REVELATION OF CHRIST  
. IN THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN .

BY

WILLIAM SAMUEL BISHOP, D.D.

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IN GRATEFUL MEMORY  
OF  
WILLIAM PORCHER DU BOSE,  
DOCTOR IN SACRED THEOLOGY,  
WHO, BOTH BY HIS LIFE, AND BY  
THE SPOKEN AND PRINTED WORD,  
BORE CLEAR AND PENETRATING  
WITNESS TO THE GOSPEL OF DIVINE  
PERSONALITY.



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## PREFACE.

THE Gospel of St. John has been called "the greatest of the religious books of the world." Unquestionably, it has a special message for this time in which we are living. Amid the complexities and confusions of the more or less chaotic world of the present day, the profound simplicities of this Book are most refreshing; amid our doubts and misgivings, its sublime affirmations bring a strength and comfort which is incomparable. This is true, of course, only in the case of those who are ready to receive its message.

The aim of this little work,—the outcome, in part, of a course of addresses delivered in St. Thomas' Church, Washington, D.C., during the Lent of 1927,—is to set forth certain aspects of the Self-revelation of Christ, as recorded in the Fourth Gospel. The culmination of these is found in that supreme expression of the Filial consciousness of Jesus known as His "high-priestly" prayer (in chapter xvii.). The remaining chapters (xviii.—xxi), dealing with the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, are not, just now, to be the immediate subject-matter of our thought. It may seem that in omitting these last four chapters, this book has left out precisely that which is of the greatest importance. True it is that our Lord's revelation of Himself in His Divine yet human personality can never for a moment be dis-severed from those facts of cardinal import,—His death on the cross and His rising again from the grave. But it is *the communication* of His redeeming and vitalising power *to us* which these facts

signalise. Even before His death on Calvary, our Lord had, in a sense, completed His revelation of Himself. The Cross was to set His power free upon its redeeming mission, while the Resurrection was to set the final seal upon all that He had declared concerning Himself as the Son of Man and Son of God. The cleansing and quickening energy which proceed from the Cross of Jesus is symbolised by the water and the blood which flowed from His pierced side as He hung thereon. By these are indicated those sacramental channels through which is conveyed to us the power and efficacy of His redemption. But the sacramental interpretation of that twofold Sign of "the water and the blood" poured forth on Calvary is supplied in earlier chapters of the Gospel;—in our Lord's interview with Nicodemus, and in His discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum.

But it is in the "high-priestly" prayer of Jesus, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter, that we may discern the climax of the Self-revelation of the Son of God. It is all summed up in the words with which this prayer concludes, and which express the ultimate scope and purpose of the Saviour's mission:—"I made known unto them thy Name, and will (yet) make it known, that the love wherewith thou (O Father) lovedst me may be in them, and I in them."

It is just this Gospel which we need, especially in these days of the widespread prevalence of a vague and high-flown idealism on the one hand and of a "psychology without the soul" upon the other. The correction of that more or less conscious egoism which afflicts us,—and which (strangely enough) may even be found in combination with the denial of the very existence of the true moral and spiritual self,—is to be found in the one great fact of the



Revelation, in Jesus Christ, of a Personality which, in its inmost essence, is Divine. It is Christ in His uniqueness as the eternal Word of Life,—the Word who “became flesh,”—who is, in this Gospel of St. John, presented to our *minds* for recognition, and, above all, to our *hearts* for the acceptance and self-surrender of faith.

As to the question in regard to the authorship of this Gospel:—To my mind, the simplest and most natural view is that which has come down from the beginning in the tradition and faith of the Church;—namely, that the Apostle John,—the brother of James and the companion and friend of Peter,—was the author. It is upon those who deny or call in question the Johannine authorship that the burden of proof surely rests. This Apostolic authorship is not argued in the following pages; it is taken for granted. The aim of this present volume is not historical criticism, but exposition; it is an attempt at an analytical interpretation of the message of the Gospel itself.

Perhaps a word should be said here in regard to the quotations from Holy Scripture which occur in the following pages. It will be noticed that these do not always conform, with literal accuracy, either to the language of the Authorised Version, or to that of the Revised Version. Both of these Versions have been used with a certain degree of freedom. Where my own rendering differs from both of them, I have frequently given (in a footnote) the Greek word, or words, upon which my own is based. I think, however, it will be found that there are no serious departures from the renderings either of the older or of the more recent Version.

While the purpose of this book is practical rather

than theological or dogmatic, nevertheless, the fact cannot be ignored that St. John is a theologian as well as an Evangelist. As such, he seeks to interpret to the *minds* as well as to the *hearts* of those to whom he is writing that Supreme Personality who is the Burden of his theme. The great truths concerning Christ are here presented, not in abstract categories, but in terms of *life* and *deed*. It is through speech and action,—above all, it is through the personal Presence of Jesus Himself as “God manifest in the flesh” that the revelation comes. For St. John’s purpose was not merely to convey information or to win an intellectual assent. Rather it was to elicit in the hearts of his readers the response of a living and vital *faith*:—“These things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye may have life in His Name.”

Should the effect of this little work be to confirm and establish the faith of any of its readers in that same Divine Master, its author will indeed feel,—and feel most humbly,—that he has been abundantly rewarded.

W.S.B.

1912 Belmont Road,  
Washington, D.C.,

*Whitsun-week, 1928.*

## CHAPTER I.

### THE FOUR-FOLD EVANGEL AND THE UNIQUENESS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

It is an ancient tradition in the Church which finds in the four "living creatures" of Ezekiel's vision and of the Apocalypse the symbols of the Four Evangelists. Those fiery cherubs, bearing the appearance of Man, Lion, Ox and Eagle, supported the throne of the God of Israel; and they, together with the wheels of His chariot, were animated by one living spirit. This may well be taken as a figure of the unity which prevails amid the diversity of viewpoint and expression in the evangelic portraiture of the Christ. The Gospel is but one, though the mode of presentation is four-fold. It is thus that the unsearchable riches and the Divine fulness of Christ, the Son of God, are more fully exhibited and more adequately interpreted to us. We need not be over-anxious about identifying this or that particular "Beast," or "Living Creature," with one or the other individual Evangelist. But their *number*, surely, is significant. *Four* is, throughout the Bible, the number of Creation; the Gospel, like Jehovah's throne, is four-square, facing towards all the quarters of the earth, with all its kindreds, tribes, tongues and nations.

Let us briefly indicate certain of the "differentia" of these four original writings which made their appeal so universal in the beginning of the Gospel, and which emphasise that Gospel's universality to-day.

(1.) St. Matthew, as has so often been pointed out, emphasises our Lord's descent from David and from Abraham, and dwells upon His fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies. This would make a special appeal to the conservative and orthodox Jews of Palestine, for whom, first of all, this Gospel seems to have been written. Certain other characteristics of this Book, which stands first in the New Testament Canon, may be referred to later.

(2.) St. Mark's book, the briefest of the four, seems to be pre-eminently the Gospel of *action*. It begins, not with the infancy of our Lord or of His Fore-runner, but with the activities of full-grown men,—with the mission of John the Baptist, with the baptism of Jesus and with His ministry in Galilee. It would seem that this Gospel,—which, in its point of view, has much in common with that of St. Matthew,—was written primarily for the Jews of the "Dispersion"; for those who were scattered throughout portions of the Roman Empire, more or less distant from the Holy Land. These would be, for the most part, men of affairs; men of secular activity; affected by the pervading spirit of Roman energy and discipline. As a matter of fact, St. Mark's Gospel may well have been written in Rome.

(3.) St. Luke,—the friend and companion of St. Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles,—presents to us Christ as the Saviour of all men,—the Healer and Physician of the soul. His is the Gospel of *redemption*,—of rescue and salvation for the needy and the outcast; for those who have gone astray; for the "lost sheep," whether of the House of Israel or of the great Gentile world outside. Moreover, this is in a peculiar sense the Gospel of the Infancy, as it is the Gospel for women. In the words of

Dr. Plummer,—<sup>1</sup>“ All through this Gospel (women) are allowed a prominent place, and many types of womanhood are placed before us; Elizabeth, the Virgin Mary, the prophetess Anna, the widow at Nain, the nameless sinner in the house of Simon, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, the woman with the issue, Martha and Mary, the widow with the two mites, the ‘ daughters of Jerusalem ’ and the women at the tomb. A gospel with this marked antipathy to exclusiveness and intolerance appropriately carries the pedigree of the Saviour past David and Abraham to the parent of the whole human race.” Those three parables of redemption for the individual,—the Lost Coin, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Son,—in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke, may be set over against the seven parables of the Kingdom in St. Matthew xiii. Undoubtedly, St. Luke was a Gentile by birth, as the other three Evangelists were Jews; an ancient tradition says that he was “ by nation a Syrian of Antioch,”<sup>2</sup> and this would sufficiently indicate his point of view. He may well have been a Jewish proselyte, however, before his conversion to Christianity.

(4.) As St. Luke’s Gospel is for all races and nationalities, so, too, is the Gospel of St. John no less universal in its appeal. For although St. John was of Jewish birth, and one of the original disciples of Jesus, yet the long years which had elapsed before he wrote his Gospel and the circumstances of his residence in Ephesus,—that great centre of Gentile worship and culture,—together with his calling as an apostle of Christ,—had led him to a very detached

<sup>1</sup> *The Gospel of St. Luke*, pp. xlii., xliii., in *Internat. Crit. Commentary*.

<sup>2</sup> Hastings: *Dictionary of the Bible*; art., “ Luke the Evangelist.”

position in regard to the Jewish nation and people. In his Gospel, John refers repeatedly to "the Jews," or to that "nation" in a purely objective way, as though he were no longer one of themselves. Moreover, St. John's is the Gospel for all *ages* of human life;—for the "fathers," for the "young men" and for the "little children"; above all, for those who are childlike in faith and in spirit.

Finally, as the others are the Gospels of the "Kingdom of God," or, (as St. Matthew expresses it) of the "Kingdom of heaven," so St. John's is the Gospel of a Divine Person,—the Person of the Son of God. As a matter of fact, St. John does not use the term "Gospel," either in its noun- or in its verb-form; He does not emphasise the "mighty works"<sup>3</sup> of Christ, or His specific precepts and teachings, as these are set forth, for example, in the Sermon on the Mount. The "mighty works" with him are but "signs," indications,—carrying us back at once to the nature and being of Him who is the Revealer of God and the Source of life and salvation. The teachings at once run back to and find their meaning in the "word" of Him who is the Truth. It is the Gospel of personal testimony to the personal Christ who reveals Himself both as the Divine Son of God and as Son of Man. It is the apocalypse, not of things to come, but of Him who is and was and ever will be Truth and Life itself.

And now let us look for a moment at the personality of the man who has put on record this testimony, who has left for us that which has been called "the most wonderful of the religious books of the world."

<sup>3</sup> *δυνάμεις*.



John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved." With his brother James and with Peter, he was associated with our Lord on terms of peculiar intimacy. The two brothers, James and John, received from their Master the name "sons of thunder." This seems to point to a certain warmth of temperament, say rather to a fiery enthusiasm, with which our Lord would seem to have been not unsympathetic. He was drawn to these men of ardent spirit, as He was to the impetuous and simple-hearted Peter. To John, Jesus, dying upon the Cross, bequeathed His Mother; this disciple was to fill the place in her heart and life left vacant by the departure of her Divine Son. This fact in itself bears wonderful testimony to the character and personality of the "beloved disciple." His association with Mary was an association of filial love and tenderness throughout the period of the Mother's life.

And then there is to be considered John's training and education in the school of Christ and in the school of life. There was his experience in the three years of intimate personal fellowship with the Master, and there was his experience (of how many years we do not know) in the great Gentile city of Ephesus. His was not (as in the case of St. Paul) the training of the Gentile university, or of the Jewish Rabbinical school, but that of personal intercourse and companionship with Christ Himself. While John undoubtedly felt the contact of Greek thought, yet it is mainly by way of intuition and inward reflection that we seem to see his mind at work. In a peculiar sense, that promised "Comforter" of whom he wrote had taken the "deep things" of Christ and had showed them unto him.



It is not to the worldly-minded or the sophisticated that this Gospel of John makes its appeal. To those who are lacking in spiritual experience, its language seems to be repetitious, if not (at times) tame and insipid. In the discourses of Christ, as John reports them, the changes are rung upon certain great ideas. There is a certain child-like simplicity of expression which, to the worldly-minded, may seem to be tasteless. On the other hand, this Gospel is intensely dramatic; its movement is that of the Self-revelation of Christ, whether by word or deed; it hastens on to its consummation in the death and in the resurrection of Him who is the Centre, the sum and substance of its pages. This dramatic movement is not only that of the Self-revelation of the Son of God; it indicates at the same time the progressive development of human faith in Him on the one hand, and of human unbelief and opposition on the other. While faith responds to the various forms of witness to the Son of God, unbelief steadily and persistently rejects Him and His claims. Faith, expressing itself in such confessions as that of St. Peter,<sup>4</sup> or of Martha,<sup>5</sup> culminates in the words of St. Thomas<sup>6</sup> at the end of the record;—"My Lord and my God." On the other hand, unbelief and opposition in the case of the chief priests and rulers ripen into their resolve upon His immediate destruction, and, in the case of Judas, disloyalty has its final fruitage in black treachery. And, as the issue of faith is life eternal, so the result of unbelief is spiritual death and final perdition.

To sum up :—The Gospel of John is the Gospel of

<sup>4</sup> vi. 69.

<sup>5</sup> xi. 27.

<sup>6</sup> xx. 28.

Divine Personality. Eternal Truth, eternal Life, are not abstractions; in the Person of Jesus they find their realisation and expression. Truth and life are, in the apprehension of St. John, inseparable from Christ Himself. Truth does not transcend His Personality; spiritual life does not exist apart from Him. He *is* the Truth; He *is* the Life. Modern rationalistic teaching such as that of Emerson, and even that of Channing, exalts abstract truth and ethics above all personalities, including the Personality of Jesus Himself. Theodore Parker declared that the Gospel would be the Gospel none the less, even were it proclaimed by a Judas. But to the apostle John, to believe in the Gospel means nothing else than to believe in Jesus Himself. He *is* the Gospel; He is the Object of our faith. Religion from this point of view can be no other than personal.

And this intensely personal note is indicated and emphasised by the use of the personal pronouns in this Gospel of St. John. First of all, there is the "Ego" of Jesus Himself, in His repeated Self-affirmations,—“I am the Way”; “I am the Door”; “I am the Shepherd of the sheep.” The “I am” of Jesus is not obtrusive, is not repellent,—as would necessarily be the case with a personality which was merely human,—but is winning and compelling just because it is Divine,—the personality of the Son of God Himself. Moreover, this Divine-human personality is not only self-affirmative; it is also self-effacing:—“My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.”<sup>1</sup> “He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and there is no un-

<sup>1</sup> vii. 16.

righteousness in him.”<sup>8</sup> “Verily, verily I say unto you; the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner.”<sup>9</sup>

The self-effacement is that not only of His testimony, but of His death:—“I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”<sup>10</sup> “Verily, verily I say unto you: Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”<sup>11</sup> Such were the prophetic words of Jesus on the eve of His crucifixion, and these prophecies have been and are still being abundantly fulfilled. Those who by wilful disobedience steel their hearts against Him are thereby convicted of “loving darkness rather than light.” In the case of deliberate opposition to Him and to His message, it can surely be for no other cause but this: that men’s “deeds are evil.”<sup>12</sup>

The Gospel which St. John presents to us then, is a *personal* Gospel,—a Gospel of the Divine Person and not, primarily, a Gospel of the Kingdom. Only in two passages is direct reference made to the “Kingdom of God,”—and in each of these passages our Lord is speaking to one who is an “outsider.” In the first instance, it is Nicodemus to whom our Lord announces the condition of entrance into the kingdom of God as consisting in a new and spiritual birth,—a birth from above.<sup>13</sup> In the other instance, our Lord tells Pontius Pilate, before whose judgment-seat He is standing, that His “kingdom is not of this world.” In answer to Pilate’s question, “Art thou a king, then?” Jesus answers simply that He had come into the world to bear witness to *the truth*;

<sup>8</sup> vii. 18.

<sup>9</sup> v. 19.

<sup>10</sup> xii. 32.

<sup>11</sup> xii. 24.

<sup>12</sup> iii. 19.

<sup>13</sup> iii. 1—8.

that His voice is heard and obeyed by those who know and love *the truth*. From Pilate's view-point, this language is meaningless. "What," then, he asks, "is truth?"<sup>14</sup> But apart from these two passages, as I have said, there is in this Gospel of John no direct mention of the "kingdom." The "social Gospel" so widely proclaimed at the present time,—the Gospel of a religion which finds its expression largely, if not chiefly in fulfilling our social relationships with our fellow men,—needs to be balanced and corrected by this Gospel of the Divine *Person*,—this Gospel which emphasises first and foremost our relationship to Him whom it presents as the Centre and Source of spiritual life. The Absolute,—the Eternal One,—is here revealed as having come into relation with men; as having manifested Himself in our nature. This is the miracle of the Fourth Gospel. To have *invented* such a Book would argue that its author must himself have been more than man, or, at least, must have been possessed of more than human wisdom.

Finally, the character and purpose of the Book is seen in the statement at its close:—"These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye may have life, in his Name."<sup>15</sup> Its great purpose is to awaken and develop faith in the Son of God, to the end that those who believe may have life in union with Him.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> xviii. 36—38.

<sup>15</sup> xx. 31.

<sup>16</sup> It is not without significance that among the supplies sent to the sufferers by the great Mississippi flood of the year 1927 were some twelve thousand copies of this Gospel according to St. John.

## CHAPTER II.

THE ETERNAL LIFE MANIFESTED AND APPROPRIATED.

*St. John i. 1—18.*

THE Gospel of John, as we have seen, is a dramatic whole. As a piece of literature, it is marked by unity and completeness. From the point of view of structure it is unique among New Testament writings in that it possesses what may be termed a formal prologue (i. 1—14), and also an epilogue (chapter xxi.). The Prologue introduces the great Subject of the Gospel in His eternal nature and pre-existence as the Divine WORD. The point of departure of the Book is, therefore, super-historic; He of whom it tells us is none other than GOD manifested in the flesh. This means that in this Gospel the transcendental and the historical meet and are blended.—“In the beginning was the Word”—the Word-with-God—the Word who *was* God;—one with God, yet distinct from Him. Through this Word was Creation; apart from Him nothing came into existence. Moreover, “in him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men.” Not physical life merely,—not cosmical light, but life and light moral and spiritual. For in this Gospel, “darkness” is the darkness of evil; the “light” is the light of holiness and truth. “And the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended (or ‘overcame’) it not.”

Thus far, we may say, all is “transcendental”; all moves on the plane of eternity. But now comes an abrupt transition, in the statement of a definite

historic fact. "There 'came,'"<sup>1</sup>—there "happened," or, simply, there *was* "a man, sent from God; his name was John. The same came<sup>2</sup> for a witness, that he might bear witness concerning the Light, that all might believe through him." Here we have "witness," "testimony," "record,"<sup>3</sup>—that word of such frequent occurrence in this Gospel. Witness on the one hand, and, in response thereto, faith. These two words—Witness and Faith—are two of the keywords of St. John's Gospel. They are correlatives; as, also, are Light and Darkness. These latter, however,—Light and Darkness,—are *in contrast* with each other. There is, moreover, that other antithesis which we have already had brought before us in this Prologue of St. John,—the antithesis between eternity and time and the transition from eternity to time. There was,—in the beginning,—the Word—the Thought—the Wisdom of God. That is *eternity*. "There came a man, sent from God; his name was John." That is *time*—the temporal event—history. Almost before we realised it, the passage has been made from the one to the other.

Now this is just where philosophy and speculation,—the thought of the wise Greeks and of those Jews who had imbibed the philosophy of the Greeks,—had fallen short. Their speculation had never succeeded in getting down to the solid earth; it had always remained as it were floating in the air. So it always has been—so it always will be with philosophy. Starting, as it does, in the region of ideas, it never is able to get out of that charmed circle. To put it in another way: philosophic speculation, as such, is dreamy; whereas the Gospel is wide-awake, and it awakens us. We have seen

<sup>1</sup> ἐγένετο.<sup>2</sup> ἦλθεν.<sup>3</sup> μαρτυρία.



St. John, the eagle-evangelist, circling in his lofty flight far up above the earth, in the heaven of eternity. It is there that we behold him at the first, as he enunciates those sublime truths,—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And then, further, as he goes on to say,—in this Word “was Life, and the Life was the Light of men.” Not mere Science; not simply light intellectual—the light of “pure reason”; not that alone, but that which far transcends while it includes it,—Light moral and spiritual; the Light whose source and essence is Divine Life. But almost before we realise it, the eagle in his flight has circled down to earth, and is speaking of that “man, sent from God, whose name was John,” and of John’s testimony. The earthly fact—the human event—is just as real to our Evangelist as are those heavenly truths of which he has been speaking. For our Evangelist is not only an “idealist”; he is a “realist” as well.

Our people are reproached to-day,—the people of our Western world,—by certain thinkers who come to us from the East. We are charged with being materialists; as having no eye for the realities of the unseen world. They tell us that we do not recognise or appreciate those wondrous psychic forces which are operating unseen, yet powerful. They tell us that we are sunk down—immersed in the world of the senses, and that we cannot rise above it. But what is the remedy which Buddhism, for example, has to offer? Simply this: to deny the reality of the world of sense. But this extreme is just as fatal as is that of materialism. The Buddhist method is to deny or ignore the reality of the passions, the feelings, the emotions of the soul, and



thus seek to achieve a passionless calm. The ultimate aim is to become "absorbed" in the Infinite,—to lose one's consciousness, one's personality in the Nirvana. The goal is, to all intents and purposes, *the extinction of personality*. Now, in direct antithesis to all this, the Gospel of St. John is the *affirmation* of personality. The fact that there was "a man called John" is just as real a fact as is the existence of eternal Light and Truth itself. There is here nothing abstract—nothing dreamy; all is real and actual. The tendency of the speculative philosopher, as is well known, is to discount the importance of the human and historic facts; the tendency of the materialist, on the other hand, is to ignore or even to deny the existence of the unseen realities. But this eternal "Word" of whom St. John tells us took His place, by an act of Divine condescension, in the midst of the world of men and among human personalities. He acted upon them; He was acted upon by them,—entering into human relationships and sharing our human conditions. At the first, there was John the Baptist bearing testimony to Him; there were the disciples entering into relations of closest personal fellowship with Him, as they had come to recognise and follow Him by faith. It meant that *the Word had become flesh*. There was the secret; the Divine fact which human thought and speculation had never been able to compass; the fact which men were hardly able to receive even when it was presented to them; yet the fact in which was the one and only satisfaction of their need. "The WORD became flesh and tabernacled among us; and we beheld his glory,—(glory) as of an Only-begotten from a Father; full of grace and truth." It is the Incarnate Word—the Divine Son—

revealed in the reality of our nature, robed in the garment of our flesh; His true Personality now, as ever, Divine.

But now St. John goes a step even further than this:—"The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Two human personalities are here set over against each other; Moses the law-giver and Jesus the Christ. This surely means that Jesus is a human Personage and not only a Divine Manifestation. I have used elsewhere<sup>4</sup> the simile of the two vessels, one of them filled with oil, the other with alcohol, to illustrate the wondrous fact of the Incarnation. Suppose that of these two substances, one—the oil—is alight, burning with its own flame. The flame represents personality—the personal ego; the oil (or, in the case of the other vessel, the alcohol) the "substance" of the personal nature. Now the first vessel, with its oil already alight, is placed beside the vessel of alcohol (not heretofore ignited). As the vessels come into contact, the latter is ignited from the former, and henceforward the two substances burn together as with one flame. The simile is but an imperfect one; nevertheless, it may serve to illustrate the unique and transcendent fact that the personality of Jesus Christ, the God-man, is not two but one. He is the Eternal Son; He is also Man. Originally the One, He became the other, yet not ceasing to be what He was before. In Him two natures,—the Divine and the human,—subsist in the unity of one personal life; for the Personality is one. This is the wondrous mystery enshrined in the Church's faith; the mystery of the Incarnation. "The Life was manifested,"—so runs the witness of the

<sup>4</sup>*Spirit and Personality*, pp. 131, 132.

apostle John,—“and we have seen it, . . . and shew unto you the Life, the (Life) Eternal which<sup>5</sup> was with the Father and was manifested unto us.”<sup>6</sup>

But “manifestation”—“demonstration” is not all. There must be the appropriation of that Life. This is the final step in the Divine process and plan. “To as many as received him, to them gave he the right”—the privilege—“to become children of God; even *to them that believe* on his Name.” Thus is sounded the note of *faith*; faith which is the great key-word of this Gospel from the human (or “subjective”) point of view, as Truth and Life eternal is its objective theme. And then St. John goes on to explain the method by which we become God’s children.—“Which were born—not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Faith the condition upon which the new life is bestowed; new birth the method or process by which that life is received. A Divine birth—a birth from above is the high and heavenly privilege of those who, believing on His Name, are incorporated by Baptism into that Name. It is the gift of Regeneration; it is the result—the fruit of that Incarnation of the Son of God. He became Man that we, through Him and in Him, might become partakers of Divine nature; that we might *live*,—and ever more fully live,—in spirit, soul and body; live with not only a temporal but with an eternal life. This is the meaning of the religion of the Incarnation.

In contrast to the religion of the Incarnation, the

<sup>5</sup> *ἥτις*—“being of such sort as”; the implication is that of the unique and Divine *quality* of the Life.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Jno. i. 2.

religion of Nirvana is a religion of impersonality; it is degrading to true manhood, inasmuch as personal extinction—not personal quickening and renewal—is its goal. And on the pathway to this goal human personality is depressed and degraded by that process of “transmigration” by which it is held to pass through a variety of animal,—say rather, bestial embodiments. And what is this if not a doctrine of death,—of death to the soul? Ultimate personal extinction is held out as the *reward*, the solace for all the ills of mortal life; whereas in Christianity death—eternal death—is set forth as *the penalty of sin*. Buddha seeks to deliver us from *pain*; Christ delivers us from *sin*. The religion of Buddha is, in fact, the antithesis to the religion of Christ. No compact or covenant can be patched up between them. While Buddha preaches extinction as the goal, Christ says, “I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it abundantly.” Christianity means the enlargement and the heightening of human personality; the enhancement of personal worth and value. It measures the depths and the heights of spiritual experience.

Let us value our Christian heritage; let us hold it fast, for there are those who seek to rob us of it. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”<sup>8</sup> Our Evangelist exhorts us to “look to ourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.” And then he goes on to warn us that “whosoever transgresseth (or “goeth forward”) and abideth not in the doctrine

<sup>7</sup> x. 10.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Jno. iv. 1.

of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son."<sup>9</sup> "Little children, keep yourselves from idols"—from all false gods. For "we know that the Son of God is come, and he hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true,—in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and the Life eternal."<sup>10</sup>

*The Witness of John the Baptist.*

Chapter i., vss. 15—34.

The witness of John the Baptist, already referred to, is a three-fold testimony. Three great facts are outstanding:—First,—the *greatness* of his Successor: "He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was first in relation to me."<sup>11</sup> Second, He is "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Third, He is the true Baptiser, who shall bestow the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The unique and transcendent Personality of Jesus; His character as the Sacrifice for the sins of all mankind; His promised bestowal of the Holy Ghost;—these are the outstanding facts to which John bears his witness.

Again;—in this Gospel there are "three witnesses" whose testimony "agrees in one."<sup>12</sup> These are: John the Evangelist, John the Baptist and the Lord Himself (to whom the two former bear their testimony). And these three so "run into" each other in the utterance of their testimony that it is difficult

<sup>9</sup> 2 Jno. 8, 9.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Jno. v. 21, 20.

<sup>11</sup> πρῶτός μου ἦν. i. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Cp. 1 John v. 8;—"There are three that bear record in earth . . . and these three agree in one,"—οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.

at first sight to distinguish that which properly belongs to each one of them. For example: in chapter i., vss. 15—18, the testimony of John the Baptist seems to run into that of the Evangelist himself, without any sign or note of transition. To the present writer it seems that the Baptist's testimony here is in reality confined to the statement in vs. 15,—that of the priority and unique greatness of his Successor, and the identification of this Successor with Jesus Himself.—“John beareth witness of him, and crieth, saying, He that cometh *after* me is become *before* me, for he was ‘first in regard of me.’” But in the three verses which follow (vss. 16—18) the testimony seems to me to be that of the Evangelist himself, as being the outcome of his ripe and mature experience of the spiritual riches which he had found in Jesus Christ, and in that revelation of the Father which Jesus has made, and which Jesus *is*.—“For of his fulness we all received”—(could this have been really said by John the Baptist?)—“and grace for grace. For the Law was given through Moses” (and reaffirmed by the Baptist, one might add); “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one hath seen God at any time; the Only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

Again, in the interview with Nicodemus,<sup>13</sup> which we are to consider a little later on, there seems to be a similar instance of a transition from the testimony of one to the testimony of another, and that without any note to indicate this transition. In this case (as it seems to the present writer) it is the testimony of Jesus that gives place to the testimony of the *Evangelist* John; the latter (as in i. 16—18) being

<sup>13</sup> iii. 1—21.



the outcome and fruit of long years of reflection upon that which had been revealed in the teachings and (still more) in the personal Presence of Jesus Christ. To Nicodemus, Jesus declares the sublime truth of the new birth, and indicates the law of the spiritual life. This is followed by the declaration of the Divine origin and heavenly Personality of the "Son of Man"; who, by His "lifting up" (upon the Cross), shall become the Object of a saving faith on the part of all those who recognise in Him the Sacrifice for the sins of the world.—"No one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him may have eternal life."<sup>14</sup> Then follow (as it would appear) the reflections of the Evangelist himself, on the universal bearing and significance of this revelation of Divine love which has been made in the Person of Jesus Christ, and the moral reactions of men to this revelation; these reactions revealing, again, the hitherto-hidden character,—whether for good or evil,—of those to whom the revelation has come.—"For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God"<sup>15</sup> (vss. 20, 21).

And thus these "three witnesses,"—the Fore-

<sup>14</sup> Or, "that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have eternal life."

<sup>15</sup> It may be that in the concluding verses of chapter iii. (vss. 31—36) we have another instance of the testimony of the Evangelist carrying on and completing the witness of the Fore-runner. (See the passage.)

runner, the Evangelist and the Lord Himself,—bear a testimony which,—consisting as it does of various parts and elements (as diverse strands might enter into the making of a single cable)—is yet, in effect, one and the same. The primary witness here, as always, is that of the Spirit,—in other words, that of Jesus Himself;—“It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> 1 Jno. v. 7.

### CHAPTER III.

THE HUMAN CONTACTS OF JESUS. HIS RECOGNITION  
BY MEN; HIS RECOGNITION OF MEN.

*St. John i. 35—51.*

WE learn to know the Divine Son as He reveals Himself through human contacts; in His relations with individuals or groups of people. We learn to know Him through the various reactions to which these personal contacts give rise, whether by way of attraction or of repulsion. On the one hand there is the attractive, compelling power of His personality as it manifests itself in the awakening and development of faith on the part of those who are prepared and ready to receive Him. On the other hand, there is, even from the beginning of His manifestation, the reaction of opposition in the case of those who range themselves against Him, who wilfully persist in their failure to understand either Him or His mission.

First let us consider the reaction of *faith*, as seen in the case of those who were the first to follow Jesus. John the Baptist (who had already borne his witness to Jesus as the "Lamb of God") was standing with two of his disciples. Looking upon Jesus as He passed by, John repeats his testimony of the day before: "Behold, the Lamb of God." And at his word the two disciples leave their master to follow Jesus. Notice that in this "following" there is no outward compulsion; there is not even any

outward bidding, either on the part of John or on the part of Jesus. The two men follow Him who has been pointed out to them because of their sense of inward need.—“Jesus turned and saw them following, and said unto them, What seek ye?” By these words the two men were thrown back upon their own power of thought and reflection; upon their own faculty of deliberation and of choice. As their following of Jesus was their own act, so its continuance must be their own act. Jesus is virtually saying to Andrew and to his companion: “What do you mean by following Me? before you go further, think what it is that you are doing and count the cost.” The great principle here involved is that discipleship must be free; it must rest upon a voluntary act—an act of personal choice. “They said unto him, Rabbi . . . where dwellest Thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour” (chapter i., vss. 35—39).

In this simple narrative are exhibited the beginnings of discipleship, revealing its essential quality as involving both spiritual recognition and moral choice. To recognise in Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, means spiritual vision; to follow Him means an act of moral choice. But, more than the initial act, it means a whole series of resolves and choices, by which the entire life shall be henceforward controlled and governed.

First of all, then, discipleship means recognition; in the next place, it means fruitfulness,—in other words, service; and this step follows at once. Andrew the disciple immediately becomes Andrew the Evangelist,—and the first evangelist,—“He as

*the first*<sup>1</sup> findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias (which is, being interpreted, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus." In this act Andrew stands forth as the typical disciple. To follow Jesus means, to lead others to follow Him. If we have found the Messias for ourselves,—if we have learned to know Him, what more natural than that we should help others to know Him? If one has not found Christ for himself, he is not likely to seek to bring others to Him; indeed, is not qualified to bring others to Him. Evangelism is an essential part of true discipleship. It is not a question here as to whether one is a "clergyman" or a "layman"; it is simply a question as to whether one is a follower,—i.e., a servant of Jesus Christ. We take note of the fact that at the time of which this narrative speaks Andrew and his fellow-disciples were "laymen"; they had not as yet been commissioned as apostles.

We observe, moreover, that the following of Jesus, as exhibited in this narrative, has a background and a preparation. These first disciples,—Andrew, his brother Simon, and John (for doubtless that "other disciple" was no other than the Evangelist himself),—these men had at the first been disciples of John the Baptist. That means that they had become disciples of *repentance from sin* before they became disciples of *faith in Jesus*. While they had believed John's preaching, they had not believed John in the sense of *believing in him* as the ultimate object of their faith. They had believed John's testimony; but that testimony pointed on to the Greater than John who was to follow and supersede him. When that Greater One had come, their dis-

<sup>1</sup> οὗτος πρῶτος, verse 41.

cipleship of the lesser teacher came to an end. But this did not mean that the Baptist's message had not been one of permanent significance. As a matter of fact, the whole structure of Christian discipleship must rest upon repentance,—turning away from sin,—and can have no other foundation. For repentance is only faith on its reverse side; turning toward the light means turning one's back upon the darkness.

Repentance — faith — evangelism; — these three steps follow each other both in logical order and in the order of life. The *next* step is personal recognition on the part of Christ; it is our Lord's testimony to the individual character and personality.—“ And when Jesus beheld ” the new disciple brought by Andrew, “ he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona : thou shalt be called Cephas, (which is, by interpretation, a stone). ” By this recognition on the part of Jesus, a personal relation between Himself and His disciple is established. Our recognition *of* Him is followed by our recognition *by* Him. Jesus reads the individual character; it is a matter of importance to Him to know the quality of the material upon which and through which He is to do His work. This “ material ” is human souls;—souls in their personal and individual characteristics;—souls capable, each in its own particular way and in accordance with its particular endowment, of becoming vessels and channels of that Divine life whose source is in Jesus Himself. Reading the individual soul as He does, Jesus sees it not only in its actuality but also in its potentiality; He sees not only that which it is, but that which it is capable of becoming.—“ *Thou art Simon; thou shalt be called Peter.* ” Simon, the impetuous, the somewhat unstable son of



Jona, shall one day be known as Peter, the "rock" of steadfastness and strength. What a ground of confidence and hope, what a source of inspiration for highest effort is there in our Lord's *recognition of us!* It is the beginning, it is the end of discipleship; it is the inwardness and heart of that last great day when we all shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ:—

"As He pronounces lastly on each deed,  
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."

—"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me . . . Philip findeth Nathanael." Sometimes, as in the case of Philip, Jesus comes directly to the individual, without any human intervention or introduction; sometimes, as we have seen in the case of Simon Peter, men are brought to Jesus by some human agency. Our Lord uses both methods. He can work with or without specific means:—His miracles were sometimes accompanied by physical signs; sometimes were wrought without them, being effected by His simple word:—"Rise, take up thy bed and walk."<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes there are difficulties to be overcome in the way of discipleship. There was difficulty in Nathanael's case; the difficulty of *preconceived opinion*. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see." Experience is the test; not that "pre-judging" which is "prejudice." Nathanael rose above his prejudice, and thus revealed the candour of his mind, and the nobility of his nature. Again our Lord reads human character:—"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold

<sup>2</sup> v. 8.

an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Higher praise was never given to an individual than by our Lord to this man. We have in the Gospel many words of praise and acknowledgment on the part of Christ; words also of warning and of reproof; but no higher encomium than this, pronounced upon Nathanael, who is said to be "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." "Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

The reward of faith is greater vision. Greater revelations than these are to follow,—the heavens opened,—all power and grace of mediatorship realised in and through the Son of Man. Like the "ladder" of Jacob's vision, He is the Stairway, the Door from earth to heaven. Note that the faith to which the vision is promised is not the individual faith of Nathanael alone; it is the collective faith of the group of disciples to whom Jesus is speaking:—"Ye shall see." The beatific vision is the reward of the Church's faith, as it is the reward of the faith of the individual soul. "Ye shall see" not only signs and works of grace on earth,<sup>3</sup> but the world of

<sup>3</sup> Godet holds (see his Commentary, on this passage) that these words of our Lord refer specifically to the *miracles* which from now on (ἀπ' ἀρτι) are to take place.

the invisible and the eternal shall lie open before your vision. Not only shall ye “behold” with the physical eye; ye shall “see”<sup>4</sup> with the spiritual eye.

So let us follow; so let us believe; so let us gain the reward of spiritual vision. The supreme Goal is no other than GOD Himself. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” It is the same promise which was made of old to Abraham,—which is renewed to-day to everyone who will believe and obey the Divine voice:—“Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Note the contrast between *θεωρεῖν* and *ὁρᾶν* in chapter xvi., vss. 16, 17, 19.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. xv. 1.

## CHAPTER IV.

### TWO PERSONAL INTERVIEWS OF JESUS CHRIST.

*St. John iii. 1—21 and iv. 1—42.*

WE have noted some of the human contacts of Jesus, as of the Master with His early disciples,—with those who at the first recognised in Him “the Son of God, the King of Israel.” The Gospel of John further presents us with two extended conversations of Jesus with individuals,—i.e., with Nicodemus and with the “woman of Samaria.” Moreover (in chapters xiv.—xvi.) it gives us that remarkable conversation of Jesus with the group of His disciples in the “upper room,” just before His parting from them to return to the Father. This last, Luther has characterised as the most unique and wonderful conversation on record. In it we have presented the frank and intimate communing between the Master and His friends concerning the deep things of the spiritual life.

Let us now consider the interview with Nicodemus (as recorded in chapter iii.) and, in connection with it, our Lord’s conversation with the woman of Samaria by Jacob’s well (in chapter iv.). These two individuals were just about as different in their environment and antecedent training as it is possible to imagine. The first was “a ruler of the Jews,”—high in authority and in social position. The other was a woman of the people, and that, of the people of Samaria, regarded by the Jews as aliens and almost as outcasts. Yet Jesus speaks just as directly,

just as simply, just as profoundly to the one as He does to the other. What a lesson that to Him all souls are equally precious; that the individual, moreover, is to be considered no less than the group. This is the spirit of the true teacher, and, most of all, it is the spirit of the Master and Saviour of men.

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Nicodemus,—teacher, member of the Sanhedrin, "master of Israel,"—visits Jesus in Jerusalem. He visits Him "by night," in order to avoid attention, fearing lest he be compromised by such a visit in the eyes of the people and of his friends. Nicodemus' visit to Jesus was *purposeful*; he was troubled in mind; he was a seeker after truth. He would know what was the mission of Jesus, and what the meaning of His message.

Now,—turning for a moment to the other and the contrasted interview,—that with the woman of Samaria,—it was, we may say, quite accidental. This woman, as we have said, was an outsider,—not one of pure-blooded Jewish descent. Moreover, her reputation, even in her own city, would seem to have been none too good. Yet she had a following there; she had friends there, and a certain degree of influence. And the interview of Jesus with that woman led to a spiritual harvest in Samaria which may rightly be called the beginning of foreign missions; whereas we know not that the visit of Nicodemus to Jesus produced any spiritual results, save in the case of Nicodemus himself. The record of both interviews, however, is of the highest spiritual value; for

both conversations had to do with the deepest concerns of the spiritual life.

In the first instance, it is the spiritual life in its origin; that life, moreover, as proceeding according to its own law. Nicodemus views Jesus as "a teacher come from God," but he views Him (as so many do to-day) *upon the earthly plane*,—just like "one of the prophets." Jesus meets him at once with the challenging statement:—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus is taken aback; he cannot understand. That he,—the well-instructed teacher,—he, the man held in reverend estimation by the people,—must begin all over again! That he must begin, not only as a little child, but (so to speak) as the babe yet unborn! But Jesus reiterates His challenging statement:—"Amen, Amen, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It is a birth of the natural element of water, and of the supernatural element of the Spirit; but chiefly and primarily *of the Spirit*. And then the Master goes on to indicate the *law* of this new life:—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." This new life, in its operation, cannot be judged from the natural (or, as St. Paul would say) from the "psychical" plane of experience and of knowledge. It moves by a law of its own. Just as the actions of a man must be inexplicable to the dog or to the horse, so the actions and experiences of the spiritual man are incomprehensible to one who lives and thinks and acts upon the plane of mere *nature*. The supreme instance of this is Jesus Himself. He



said to the Jews on one occasion :—" Ye know not whence I come or whither I go ; I know whence I came and whither I go."<sup>1</sup> His witness concerning Himself is true, even though the Jews cannot receive it ; for the reason that He has sources of knowledge which they have not. To the same effect St. Paul says :—" He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."<sup>2</sup> The higher spiritual existence takes up into itself the lower, the natural existence ; reviews it ; appraises it ; uses it, but is not contained or comprehended by it.

And then Jesus goes on to speak to Nicodemus of His own future " lifting up " upon the Cross, and of life everlasting through faith in Him. This life shall be made available for all the world,—for every one, that is, who shall believe upon Him. *Faith* is the one condition of this life,—of this salvation.

In the interview with the woman of Samaria, our Lord goes even further in His exposition of the spiritual life. While in His discourse to Nicodemus He had spoken of the life eternal as conditioned upon faith in Himself, in His atoning sacrifice upon the Cross,—in His conversation with the Samaritan woman Jesus emphasises that profound truth of the spirituality of true worship, as being conditioned by the nature of its sublime and transcendent Object :—" God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship (him) in spirit and in truth." But let us trace the steps of that conversation, and see how Jesus led that simple-minded woman of the people from discourse about the water of Jacob's well until He had touched upon the deepest things of the

<sup>1</sup> viii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 15.

spiritual life. How natural it all was! and how lucidly it is set forth in the simple narrative.

Jesus, weary with His journey, "sat thus on the well." It was high noon. The disciples had gone into the city to buy food. They were intent upon "the bread that perisheth"; Jesus had in view the spiritual harvest of reclaimed and renewed lives of men and women. He says to the woman of Samaria, as she came to draw water,—“Give me to drink.” The woman, surprised, answers Him:—“How is it that thou, a Jew, askest drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.) Jesus replied:—“If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” “Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. . . . Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children and his cattle?” The answer comes:—“Every one that drinks of this water shall thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life.” He shall have not merely opportunities of quenching his thirst; he shall possess within himself a “well”—a living spring, in all its fulness and completeness, sending forth never-failing streams of refreshment and of life not only for himself but for others.

It is at this point that the teaching of Jesus in this interview with a simple woman of the people goes beyond the teaching in the conversation with Nicodemus. For the spiritual life is here set forth not only in its origin and in the working of its

higher law, but *in its life-giving effects*. Life not only in the individual who believes, and who is "born from above,"—life not only in him and for him personally; but *life through him for others*; life in its abundance, as an overflowing fountain; springing up in time, but flowing on for eternity.

Vividly is this conversation sketched by the Evangelist:—"Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." "Go, call thy husband and come hither." "I have no husband," "Well hast thou said, I have no husband. *Five* husbands hast thou had;<sup>3</sup> and the one whom now thou hast is not thine husband." "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet."

And now this daughter of Samaria falls back (as she had already done in appealing to the memory of "our father, Jacob") upon her ancestral traditions. She would seek in this way, apparently, to defend herself.—"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and *ye* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." Her conscience has been touched by the words of this strange Teacher, and is beginning to trouble her. She appeals to the differences in religious custom and observance, as between Jews and Samaritans, seeking thus (if possible) to throw up a wall of defence for herself and her own conduct. But Jesus bids her to look within; for religion is not a matter of outward observance but of the heart. "Woman, believe me; the hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall *ye* worship the Father." So far as religious tradition is concerned, the Samaritans are in the darkness; the words of the Master are unmistakable on that point.—"*Ye* worship *ye* know not what; *we* worship

<sup>3</sup> See the order of words in the Greek.

that which we know; for salvation is of the Jews." Christ's references here would seem to be to those words of Isaiah (ii. 3),—"Out of Zion goeth forth the Law, and the Word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." "But," the Master continues,—“the hour cometh and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For indeed<sup>4</sup> the Father seeketh such as his worshippers. God is a Spirit; and those who worship him must worship in *spirit* and *truth*.” Worship is not a question first of all of place, or of outward observance. Its condition is inward;—*sincerity* and *truth*. No separation between worship and conduct is possible; there is no room for a division (such as the Samaritan was endeavouring to establish) between religion and moral life. Worship must be of the heart, and, therefore, of the whole personality, including conduct; and this for the all-sufficient reason that God is not a fetish but a Spirit; the all-seeing and all-righteous Father.

The woman has no further word of reply, save to refer to the promised coming of that great Teacher for whose advent Jews and Samaritans alike were looking:—"I know that Messiah is coming; when *he*<sup>5</sup> is come, he will declare unto us all things." The woman is still seeking,—though more feebly,—to evade the issue, by making this reference to a *future* revelation. But Jesus meets this word of hers also; there is no evading of the truth which He is speaking; of the truth which is *Himself*:—"I that speak unto thee am he."

Thus Jesus has led the woman of Samaria from concern about her water-drawing to personal faith in Himself. The goal of all the "signs," of all the

<sup>4</sup> καὶ γάρ.

<sup>5</sup> ἐκεῖνος.

interviews, of all the words and works of Jesus is this : that men might *believe*. And this woman does believe. Leaving her water-pot just as it was, by the well,—forgetting the errand on which she had come, she hastens at once to the city; she wants to bring her friends at once to the knowledge of this wonderful Teacher. For “is not this the Christ?” Who else can it be? “He told me all things that ever I did.” And many of the men of the city went out and came unto Him. Many at first believed “for the saying of the woman”; many more afterward, from hearing the Master for themselves. “We know,” said they, “that this is indeed the Saviour of the world; the Christ.” This knowledge was the fruit of personal acquaintance with Jesus. He Himself was greater and more convincing in His Personality than any words about Him. “*We ourselves* have heard him.” Personal knowledge is better than hearsay evidence.

How fruitful in spiritual results was that conversation by Jacob’s well! Fruit was thereby gathered unto life eternal. For to know Jesus, and in Him to know GOD *is* life eternal.<sup>6</sup> Well might Jesus say to His disciples, returning to meet Him that afternoon at Jacob’s well,—“Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white already to harvest.” Others have sowed and planted; it is yours to reap and gather in. Such is the law of the spiritual kingdom. One takes up the task where another has laid it down; the harvest-home, the final ingathering of souls, is in the great day of eternity.

<sup>6</sup> xvii. 3.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SELF-REVELATION OF CHRIST THROUGH THE “SIGNS.”

ONE of the chief methods of our Lord's Self-manifestation was through the “signs” or miracles which He wrought; in fact, this is the natural point of departure for us as we begin our consideration of that revelation.

Among the countless miracles wrought by Jesus, our Evangelist selects some eight or nine; and within this group several stand out as typical of all the rest. For example:—Of the miracle wrought at Cana,—the turning of water into wine at the wedding feast,—it is said that this was the “beginning” of our Saviour's miracles, by which He “manifested forth his glory.”<sup>1</sup> This miracle may well be regarded as in some respects the leading type of “sacramental grace”: for thereby the element (of water, in this instance), blessed by our Lord, received a higher potency through which it became the instrument of physical refreshment and exhilaration. In this act of Christ we recognise the typical symbol of sacramental grace, as this is communicated through natural channels. For the water is related to the wine as the “natural” is related to the “spiritual.” The miracle wrought at Cana, therefore, has its proper place at the beginning of all our Lord's works of grace and power, inasmuch as it sets forth His Kingdom as the realm of supernatural grace and spiritual potency.

<sup>1</sup> ii. 11.



Resting, indeed, upon nature as its foundation, that Kingdom at the same time raises the nature which it enfolds and embraces, and transforms it to a higher power by enduing it with "life from above."

Again; to take another instance :—the Healing of the Impotent Man at the Pool of Bethesda, from the fact that it was wrought upon the Sabbath day, stands forth as indicative of our Lord's authority, as Son of God, even over those laws which God Himself has ordained. He who has enacted the precept has power to suspend or set it aside. The point is that the power over the Sabbath law is illustrative of the power of the Creator over *all* laws which He has Himself established. In this instance is seen the power which the Creator has and exerts not only in reference to positive, statutory laws of worship and ceremonial,—such as the law of the Fourth Commandment,—but also, and equally, over what we speak of as the "laws of nature." And thus, again, this one miracle is typical of all miracles. As the miracle at Cana furnishes us with the key to the meaning of sacramental grace, so the cure wrought at Bethesda enlightens us as to the authority of God, as the Law-giver and Ruler of all, to suspend or over-rule the operation of the laws which He Himself has made. Power to control, regulate or suspend the laws of religious observance is at the same time power over law as this obtains in the purely physical realm.

The miracles, or,—to use the characteristic word of St. John,—the "signs" of our Lord which we are now to consider are *four* in number;—all of them wrought either in or near Jerusalem. They are as follows :—

- (1.) The Healing of the Impotent Man at Bethesda (v. 1—18).
- (2.) Jesus Writes on the Ground (not strictly a miracle, but a “sign”) (viii. 1—11).
- (3.) The Healing of the Man Born Blind (ix.).
- (4.) The Raising of Lazarus from the Dead;—and its connection with the Treachery of Judas (xi.—xiii.).

We shall see in these a progressive development of the revelation of Christ's power, and also an ever-increasing light upon the Person and Being of Him by whom these “signs” were wrought. It was in order that men might be led to recognise in Him the One Source of all spiritual good. He is hereby revealed,—say rather, He reveals Himself,—as the Source (1) of *power*; (2) of *forgiveness* and *cleansing*; (3) of *light*; and (4) finally, and above all, of *life*; and that, *eternal*.

### *I. The Healing of the Impotent Man at Bethesda.*

“Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed and walk . . . and on the same day was the Sabbath.”—*John* v. 8, 9.

As we compare the narrative of the Synoptic evangelists,—St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke,—with the narrative of the Fourth Gospel, we find that many of our Lord's “mighty works” have this point in common;—namely, that they were wrought on the Sabbath day. We have, for example, (a) the case of the man with the withered hand. This cure, narrated by all three of the Synoptists, was wrought on the Sabbath.<sup>2</sup> (b) The cure of the woman who for eighteen years had had a “spirit of infirmity,”<sup>3</sup> and (c) the healing of the man with the dropsy.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xii. 9—14; Mk. iii. 1—6; Lu. vi. 6—11.

<sup>3</sup> Lu. xiii. 10—17.

<sup>4</sup> Lu. xiv. 1—6.

The last two of these miracles are recorded only by St. Luke. But all three of them were wrought on the Sabbath day.

As seen in connection with other cures, the story of our Lord's healing the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda presents certain special features of its own. As to the narrative itself, we note in the first place that a part of the story (vs. 3b and vs. 4) is omitted in the Revised Version; being printed in the margin, with the comment:—"Many ancient authorities (*sic*) insert wholly or in part,

. . . "waiting for the moving of the water.

For an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and troubled the water.

Whosoever then first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole,—with whatsoever disease he was holden."

Now, so far as the text goes, if I may be allowed to express my own judgment, I feel sure that the Revisers in omitting these words have acted without any sufficient warrant. The manuscripts which omit them are not the soundest and the most reliable. But,—aside from this matter of the text,—is there any special difficulty in the statement made (in vss. 3b and 4) about the angel "going down at certain seasons" and "troubling the water"? The pool in question,—the Pool of Bethesda,—was evidently a medicinal spring; its location, by one of the gates of Jerusalem (the "Sheep Gate"), near the city wall. Says Archdeacon Watkins,<sup>5</sup>—"It is established beyond doubt (1) that there are, and there were, on the East of Jerusalem, mineral springs; (2) that these are, and then were, intermittent; and (3) that such springs are resorted to in the East,

<sup>5</sup> See Ellicott's *Commentary*, "The Four Gospels," *in loc.*

just as they are in Europe" (and elsewhere). But while we, from our modern scientific standpoint, would say that the operation of such a spring as this, with its healing properties, is due to the working of "laws of nature," the ancient, and especially the Oriental world (which knew little of "laws of nature") ascribed these phenomena to a supernatural agent,—here spoken of as an "angel." But the question, primarily, is not one of view-point, or of interpretation, whether ancient or modern, but of *fact*. Concerning the fact that cures were actually accomplished by the healing properties of the waters of Bethesda, there need be no doubt whatever. But what about the interpretation of the fact? I submit that there need be no irreconcilable conflict as between the "scientific" and what we may term the "angelological" interpretation of what actually took place. (It may be remarked in passing that there is nothing said as to the *appearance* of any angel or supernatural being in St. John's narrative.)

But why, after all, need we really have any difficulty at the idea of angelic operation? There is no real conflict between *this*, which we may call the "religious," and *that* which we think we may verify by observation as the "scientific" explanation. It is only that the "modern" mind is, to a certain extent, more accustomed to think along "scientific" lines than along religious lines. But the two explanations of a given fact may both be true, and may be in perfect harmony with each other;—as we believe they are in this case of the curative agency of the waters of Bethesda. We need have no difficulty, as a matter of fact, with the statement made in the Gospel narrative. I submit, therefore, that it is a serious error, not only on textual, but especially on

religious grounds, that the New Testament Revisers have omitted these words about the angel "going down at certain seasons and troubling the water,"—thereby rendering the curative properties of the spring more effective than at other times. It is the critics themselves who are here responsible for "troubling the waters" of the Evangelic (and "angelic") narrative.

But now, passing on to the account of the cure wrought by our Lord upon the impotent man, we note at the outset our Lord's first words, addressed to the sufferer :—"Willest<sup>6</sup> thou to be made whole?" Here at once is an appeal to *purpose*,—to *will-power*. Our Lord's question is evidently intended to *rouse* the man; to stir his faculties into action. The man's answer :—"Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me in the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." Jesus says immediately;—"Rise, take up thy bed and walk." An unconditional command. Apart from all considerations of the Pool itself;—of the healing qualities of the water, or of the agency of an angelic messenger,—Jesus bids this man,—powerless as he is in himself,—to *act*. He is bidden to do the humanly impossible thing, in simple reliance upon the power of Jesus. He *acts*; and forthwith the cure is accomplished. We may say, indeed, that *the man himself* wrought the miracle; for he did the "supernatural" thing; but he did it only through the power of Jesus.

It is now, however, that the *legal* difficulty enters in to complicate the situation;—owing to the attitude of the Pharisaic party, and their interpretation of the sacred Law. To take up one's bed and walk the

<sup>6</sup> θέλεις.

public streets involved a violation of the strict law of the Sabbath. The narrative itself plainly states that Jesus (through bidding the man so to take up his bed and walk) had, as a matter of fact, Himself "broken the Sabbath."<sup>7</sup> But Jesus both by His *deed* and by His *doctrine* rises not only above the Rabbinical interpretation of the Fourth Commandment, but even above the letter of the Commandment itself. What was our Lord's reason, or what were His reasons for doing this, and thus boldly throwing down the gauntlet to the Rabbinical schools? In the first place: Suppose that the impotent man had continued lying on his couch,—how could he have known that he had been healed? It was by rising, in obedience to the word of Jesus, and not only by the act of rising, but still more by the act of carrying his bed (in obedience to the same Divine word) that the man could be assured that he had indeed been restored to health and to his bodily powers. In other words, the carrying of the bed was a necessary part of the cure.

But our Lord had a further and a broader purpose even than this in giving His command to the impotent man. In selecting the Sabbath as the day on which to work this cure, our Lord intended something more than to teach the lesson (pointed out in the Synoptic narratives) that "the Sabbath is made for man; not man for the Sabbath":—important as that lesson is. It was to teach a lesson of universal application in regard to all those Divine works which we call "miracles." In the case of each and all of them this great fact is shown,—namely, that *God is able to rise above His own law*. It matters not whether the "law" in question is what we know as

<sup>7</sup> v. 18.



a "law of nature," or whether it is a law of positive enactment, such as the Fourth Commandment. In either case, God, who has given the law, is Himself not necessarily bound by His own ordinance. Not, that is, unless the law proceeds from His own essential nature, and, therefore, involves His own essential and eternal righteousness. The commandments "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not bear false witness," rest upon a different basis either from the so-called "laws of nature" on the one hand, or from the ceremonial ordinance of Sabbath-observance on the other. The former,—and other commandments like them,—are of a distinctly *moral* character, and, therefore, may not be set aside, even by the ordinance of God Himself. Just as it is "impossible for God to lie,"<sup>8</sup> so it would be in contravention of His own essential and eternal righteousness to set aside any of the canons of truth, or justice, or moral holiness. God cannot contradict Himself. But the matter of Sabbath-observance comes within a different category. The Jews interpreted the words of the Fourth Commandment so literally as even to apply it to God Himself. They held that God not only "rested" at the beginning, but that He still "rests" on the seventh day which He has for ever sanctified, and commanded man to observe in imitation of His example. The Rabbinical interpreters even went so far as to represent God as Himself spending the hours of the Sabbath in contemplation and study of the Divine Law. Thus they virtually exalted the Law to a place even higher than that of the Creator Himself. This was to make the Law the supreme aim and goal of religion and of human life.

<sup>8</sup> Heb. vi. 18; Tit. i. 2.

Strange as this interpretation of the Rabbis may appear to us to-day, does it not find a parallel in these our own times in the procedure of many of the votaries of "Science"? For it is these latter who, by magnifying the "laws of nature" as in themselves eternal and immutable, virtually enthrone them in the place of God Himself. The Creator is set aside, and in His place is enthroned the "system" or "order of the universe." And the latter is accepted as the ultimate reality and the all-sufficient explanation of whatever takes place,—nay, of whatever has occurred or ever will take place, whether "in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth."

Now our Lord boldly challenges this whole conception of "Law" as the ultimate and supreme reality, by making the uncompromising claim that He who has instituted the law is not Himself in subjection to it. In this particular instance Jesus is challenging the Rabbinical interpretation of the Sabbath law, but, as we have seen, His words have a far wider bearing. And they have a special meaning and message for us, who live in this "scientific" age. Our Lord says:—"My Father worketh hitherto, and (therefore it is that) I work"<sup>a</sup>—even on the Sabbath day. Does not God make His sun to rise and cause His rain to fall on the *seventh* just as well as on the other days of the week? Is it not He who is continually carrying on His mighty work in the Providential governing of the world and of all that goes on therein? This world does not and cannot go on by itself; it is powerless apart from its Maker. This, then, is the sufficient warrant for what God's

<sup>a</sup> v. 17.

Son has done in raising a man from impotence to strength and health even on that day which has been consecrated as the Day of rest.

There is a still further lesson to be derived from this, the first one of our Lord's miracles which is described by St. John as having been wrought at Jerusalem. Our Lord is herein set forth as not only supreme in His authority in relation to the Law, but also as the Source of life and power and healing, both for the body and for the soul of man. He has come to *liberate* and to *set free*;—not least, to set us free from the dominion of *legalism*, in whatever form the latter may show itself. For there is a "legalism" of "Science," as well as of religious ceremonialism. And it is this latter from which, perhaps, we stand in greatest danger to-day. The days of the Rabbinists and of the theologians may seem to have passed; it is the man of science who now occupies the seat of honour and of authority in the eyes of the world. Nevertheless, all that teaching (whatever may be its form) that would exalt "law" in itself above the Law-giver, has in reality a depressing and a deadening effect upon the human spirit. The worship of Law as an end in and for itself, while it undermines the conviction of human *liberty*, at the same time cannot but weaken and impair the consciousness of *personality*. For personality is bound up with freedom; the two conceptions stand or fall together. In whatever form, then, this cult of "Law" shows itself, its effect must always be to imprison the human spirit and to stifle human activity, especially in its higher manifestations.

Now in contrast with all this, our Lord said,—“I am come that they may have *life*, and that they may

have it *abundantly*.”<sup>10</sup> He has come to set free the fettered and imprisoned human spirit, as well as for the healing and blessing of the physical life of man.

This, then, which St. John sets forth in the forefront of our Lord’s miracles wrought at Jerusalem,—the healing of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda,—stands forth as a typical “work” of His, and is so referred to by Him on a later occasion. In one of His public discourses in the Temple<sup>11</sup> we find our Lord saying:—“I did one work, and ye all marvel. . . . Are ye wroth with me because I made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath?” There is a pathos in these words of Christ. O the blindness, the hardheartedness of men!—“They knew not that it was I that healed them.” So Jehovah had yearned over His wayward people Israel . . . .<sup>12</sup>

The purpose, then, of this “Sign” was to direct attention on the part of the people to our Lord as the Source of power and life, both physical and spiritual. Its purpose, moreover, was to exhibit Him as the supreme Source of authority in the moral and spiritual universe.—“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” It is the utterance of a *King*; of One who challenges our highest and our undivided allegiance, as the only Master and Lord. In His service and in that alone shall we find perfect freedom; for where the Spirit of Jesus prevails, there and there alone is true liberty.

<sup>10</sup> x. 10.

<sup>11</sup> vii. 21, 23.

<sup>12</sup> See Hos. xi. 3 (and note page-heading in the American Revised Version).

*II. Jesus Writes on the Ground.*

“(Jesus) said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”—*John viii. 7b.*

The narrative which is given us in these opening verses of the eighth chapter of our Gospel deals, I suppose, with one of the best-known episodes in the life of Jesus. It is the story of one who was brought by certain scribes and Pharisees into the presence of Jesus for His judgment upon her case. “Master,” say they, “this woman was taken in adultery; in the very act. Now Moses in the Law commanded us that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?” Needless to say, these lawyers and Pharisees, in addressing this question to our Lord, were acting insincerely and hypocritically. Their aim was to entrap Him, that they might find ground on which to accuse Him, either to the Jewish authorities or to the Roman government. They were seeking to impale the Master on the horns of a dilemma, just as when, later on, the Pharisees and the Herodians proposed to Him the question as to the lawfulness of giving tribute to Cæsar. For, if Jesus were to declare that this woman,—taken in adultery, as she had been,—should *not* meet with the penalty prescribed by the Jewish law, He would be setting Himself against the authority of Moses and of the sacred Scriptures. On the other hand, were He to give judgment that the woman should suffer the extreme penalty imposed by the Mosaic law,—the penalty of death,—He would immediately find Himself in conflict with the Roman authority. For, by the Roman law, the power of imposing the death sentence had been taken away from the Jewish people. We remember how, later on, when the multitude were demanding the death of Jesus at the hands of the

Roman governor, they replied to Pilate's suggestion,—"Take ye him, and judge him according to your law." "It is not lawful," they said, "for us to put any man to death."<sup>13</sup>

We shall see with what Divine tact and insight Jesus extricated Himself from, or rather, rose superior to, the toils so skilfully set for Him, and, in so doing, has left for us an imperishable legacy of truth and grace in those words which He addressed, first to the accusers, and then to the woman herself.

But before we consider this episode in the life of our Lord more closely, we pause to note the remarkable fact that the section of the Gospel in which it occurs,—beginning with the last verse of chapter vii. and extending through the twelfth verse of chapter viii.,—is "found in no Greek manuscripts earlier than the sixth century; is not an integral part of any of the oldest Versions, and is not quoted as by St. John before the last half of the fourth century."<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, it is admitted by all that this is a genuine incident in the life of our Lord. The story commends itself to all of us as breathing the very spirit of the Lord Jesus. For myself, I have no doubt that St. John wrote it. Why, then, is it not found in those earliest manuscripts that have come down to us? The reason is, I venture to think, an *internal* one,—pertaining to the subject-matter itself. The story presented a stumbling-block to the minds of many who heard it at the first. It was feared by men in the early Church that the reading of this incident in the public assembly would not be "for edification." It was thought that it might seem to some of the hearers to give license to sin, inasmuch

<sup>13</sup> xviii. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Ellicott's *Commentary in loc.* (p. 555).



as the Master is represented as saying, "Neither do I condemn thee." Hence, the omission of this passage.

We have already observed another instance of the omission of a passage in St. John's narrative,—not, however, by ancient but by modern editors,—the account, that is, of the angel going down and disturbing the waters of the Pool of Bethesda. But in that instance (as we have seen) the difficulty is not a "moral" but a "scientific" one. It is that this angelic "troubling" of the Pool does not appear to square with the modern scientific view-point. Nevertheless, as we have already observed, it is not *really* in conflict with the latter; and certainly there is abundant MSS. authority for the retention of the verses (3b and 4, of chapter v.). But while the modern mind finds difficulty with the supernatural interpretation of a physical event or process, it was the *moral* question involved in our Lord's words to the sinful woman that presented a difficulty to the minds of men in the days when the Gospel of Christ was first proclaimed. *Our* impression, on reading this passage, is quite different; owing, of course, to the changed position of women in the modern world, due to the influence of two thousand years of Christianity. To our minds to-day the question occurs at the very outset:—"Why was *the woman* brought before Jesus, while *the man* involved in the case escaped any such publicity?" Indeed, the Law of Moses, to which the Pharisees made their appeal, had expressly provided that the *adulterer* as well as the adulteress, should "surely be put to death."<sup>15</sup> But to our modern view this story of our Lord's

<sup>15</sup> Lev. xx. 10.

dealing with the scribes, as well as with the woman, on this occasion presents no difficulty whatsoever. Indeed, we recognise this incident as being in perfect accord with the whole spirit and method of Jesus. Not only does the story bear within itself the marks of genuineness; in its every word it expresses the very grace and truth that were, and are, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

As we consider this story of the woman and of Jesus silently "writing on the ground" in the presence of her accusers, we are impressed with the Divine tact and delicacy which marked our Lord's action, both in relation to the woman and to the men who had brought her before Him. We see how, in rising superior to the toils so craftily set for Him, He removes the whole matter from the region of external, legal enactment to the higher sphere of morals and of religion,—to the inner region of the conscience and of the heart. In the first place, our Lord does not permit Himself to become entangled in personal relations, either with the men or with the woman, on the purely human plane. From the very first, *He holds Himself aloof*; He will approach this matter in His own way, and on His own initiative. What the scribes and Pharisees had failed to reckon with was this:—*His Divine insight*; the fact that He knew what was in the heart of each one there present. As St. John has already testified (in chap. ii., vs. 25), "*He knew what was in man.*" His words,—the only words He spoke to the men,—show this clearly;—"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." But before this,—at the very first,—Jesus had held Himself aloof. He had given no answer to the repeated and urgent questions with which He was being plied.—

“Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground (as though he heard them not.)”

It is worthy of note that this is the only occasion on which we read of Jesus *writing* anything. Have we any inkling as to what it was that He wrote? Is it not natural to suppose that they were the very words which He was about to utter to those who were so eagerly questioning Him? Rising up then, and facing the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus spoke those immortal words:—“He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone.” And then, stooping down again, He continues His writing,—(no doubt, completing the sentence which He had begun). Being “convicted by their own conscience,” the men go out, one by one, until Jesus is “left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.” And now, for the first time, Jesus speaks to the woman herself.—“Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?” “No man, Lord.” “Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.”

So ends the story,—so characteristic of our Lord’s whole method of dealing with sin and with sinners. It is not that the sin is here *condoned*; it is distinctly recognised in our Lord’s closing words,—“Go, and sin no more.” On the other hand, we do not read, in so many words, that the sin was *forgiven*; for,—so far as we read,—there had been as yet no explicit repentance on the part of the woman. We can well believe, however, that the woman, even before Jesus addressed her, was in tears. Weeping tears, now no longer of anger and shame,—as when she had first been dragged into the presence of the Master,—but tears of penitence and broken-hearted sorrow. Our Lord’s words bring to her at once the gracious mes-

sage of peace,—“Neither do I condemn thee,” and the Divine admonition,—“Go, and sin no more.”

Our Lord, as we have already seen, takes this whole matter from its *external, legal* connection and transfers it to the inner ground of the conscience and of the heart. He had not been appointed as an earthly ruler and judge. His court was in the sphere of morals and religion. His “kingdom,” as He testified to Pilate, was “not of this world.” Nevertheless, there has never been any power like that of His Gospel to cleanse the individual life by purifying the springs of action that lie deep within the heart. Nor is there any incident in the whole narrative of our Lord’s life and teaching which more beautifully manifests and confirms the statement made by St. John at the beginning of his Gospel:—“The *law* came by Moses; *grace* and *truth* came by Jesus Christ.” Those sentences of His, interpreting His “writing on the ground,” have engraved themselves indelibly upon the hearts of men and of women, all down the ages:—“He that is without sin among you, let him (first) cast a stone at her”; “Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.”

### III. *The Healing of the Man Born Blind.*

“He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight.”—*John ix. 11.*

This is the testimony of a man born blind to the fact that Jesus had healed him of his blindness. It is a simple statement of fact,—of the man’s own experience. But it is a typical miracle, even as all the miracles recorded by St. John in this Fourth Gospel are typical. In each case the miracle is a

*sign*,—pointing to Jesus in one or another aspect of His Self-revelation. The word of Christ illuminates the miracle by indicating its spiritual meaning; the miracle, on the other hand, interprets the word of Christ in physical terms, and thus strengthens and confirms our faith. In this case, the word of Christ's self-revelation is this:—"I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."<sup>16</sup> If Jesus has power to give physical sight to the blind, that fact confirms our faith in His power to give *spiritual* light,—to illuminate the *soul*. Just as in the case of the paralytic, brought to our Lord on the couch, to whom Christ said,—“Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.”<sup>17</sup> The fact that Jesus presently showed His power to heal the paralytic of his physical infirmity by enabling him to take up his bed and walk, only illustrates and confirms His power to give strength and healing to the soul through the forgiveness of sins. If He has the *one* power, what marvel is it that He should have the other also? So in this instance of the blind man; he not only received physical sight, but,—what was far better,—this led to his receiving spiritual vision and illumination.

Light is one of the fundamental and essential things in this universe. Apart from the light of the sun, no life could exist upon this earth at all. Light is absolutely essential for the existence, as well as for the growth and well-being both of the vegetable and of the animal creation. The very first thing that we are told that God did at the beginning of His great work of creation was to call *light* into exist-

<sup>16</sup> viii. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Mt. ix. 2.

ence. And God Himself is described to us as "Light, in whom is no darkness at all." One of the great objects of our Saviour's mission when He came into the world was to give moral and spiritual "light" to all who would receive it. He said:—"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

But Jesus did not cease to be the Light of the world when He departed from this earth and returned to the Father who had sent Him. No, nor had He begun to be "the Light of men" only from the beginning of His earthly life. Long before that first Christmas Day,—yes, from the very beginning of human history, He had been "the true Light, enlightening every man that had come into the world." But His special manifestation, as presented to us in this Gospel of St. John (and, of course, in the other Gospels as well) was during His life here upon earth,—in the "twelve hours" of His earthly day.

Now the complement of *light* is *vision*. Vision answers to light, and, we might almost say, makes light worth while. Of what avail is light to any creature,—to you or to me,—if we cannot see it? That was the trouble with the man whose case we are now to consider,—the man born blind, whose sight was restored by Jesus. This man's greatest and most urgent need, however, was that his *spiritual* vision should be developed. In order to do this, the restoration of his physical sight was but the first step. It was not simply that his bodily sight should be restored;—that in itself would indeed be a great blessing. This latter was only in order to a further and a higher end;—the imparting of that spiritual vision which is but another name for *faith*.



Now, as we shall see, the development of faith was, in the case of this man, a more gradual process than that of the restoration of his eyesight. Even in the latter case, all was not done at once; we trace the steps of a process. Jesus had done His part, and then the blind man, in turn, must do *his* part. First of all, we are told that Jesus "made clay" by moistening a little earth with saliva, and anointing the man's eyes. And then the man himself was bidden to go,—still in his blindness,—to find his way, or be led, to the pool of Siloam and there to bathe his eyes. This he did; and forthwith his sight was restored. That,—so far as we are informed,—was the whole process. The account of it is very brief;—told in a very few words.

But of the development of the man's *spiritual* vision we are given a much longer and fuller account; the process itself,—as we may reverently say,—was on a higher plane, even though the physical miracle must also be acknowledged as Divine. In the development of that higher vision which is but another name for faith, we are able to recognise several distinct steps.

First, there was the step of *identification* and of *recognition*; which meant, on the part of the man himself, the acceptance of personal responsibility. So to speak, he *answered when his name was called*; he did not seek to avoid recognition or to evade responsibility. For we find that from the beginning the *fact* of his healing was called in question by his neighbours and acquaintances. They questioned him:—"Were you really the man?" "Were you really and truly healed?" In answering these inquiries,—whether sincere or insincere,—the man evinced both courage and honesty. "Yes, I am the

man who was healed; I, born blind as I was, have received my sight." "How, then," they asked him, "did it come to pass?" The answer comes back, in simple sincerity,—“A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes; and I washed, and do see.”

But now the neighbours and townsfolk bring him to the Pharisees. They all know well that this fact has a bearing upon the claims of Jesus. He had already come into conflict with the Pharisees, and they had sought to arrest Him. This cure of the blind man was, evidently, a matter which the scribes and Pharisees would want to know about; and more especially on account of the fact that this cure had been wrought on the Sabbath day. So the man is brought before the Pharisees, and *they* question him. He stands to his guns, although it is easy to see that this will bring him into serious trouble. He will be at once recognised as one of Jesus' disciples; he will run the risk of being put out of the synagogue. It would be easy for him to deny his identity with “the man who had sat and begged,”—and thus avoid all trouble with the authorities. But what a cowardly thing that would be! and how ungrateful to the Person to whom he owed the restoration of his sight. So the man “sticks to his guns”; that is, he simply tells the truth about his healing. He is, then, *a man of truth*; he is *dependable*. And have we not here the foundation of all faith? A man who is untruthful,—who is deceitful in himself,—cannot be a man of *faith*. People will not trust him; nor can he, on his part, be loyal to the truth. For this is the very essence of faith;—loyalty to the truth.

But in the case of the man who had been healed of his blindness there are still further implications

which his loyalty to the truth must carry with it. For now the Pharisees question him further.—“What do you say of him,—of this Jesus who, as you assert, has healed you?” The answer comes, clear and direct:—“He is a prophet.” Consider what is involved in this. Another step has now been taken in the forward movement of faith. Loyalty to conviction has led to positive testimony to the truth,—or rather, in this case, to Him who *is* the Truth. The trustworthy, dependable man has become a *witness*.

Now follows another development in the action; another forward step in the drama of faith's progress. The Pharisees call the man's parents, and question them, still endeavouring to get something that they can use against “this Jesus of Nazareth.” The parents, however, will not take the responsibility of affirming anything whatever, so far as the Prophet of Nazareth is concerned. They know well that the Jewish authorities have already agreed that if any man shall confess that Jesus is the Christ,—the Messiah and King of Israel,—he shall be put out of the synagogue. The parents admit that this man is their son; that he had been born blind; and that,—as anyone can see,—he is now in the enjoyment of perfect eyesight. So far they will go, but no further. They shift the responsibility upon their son:—“He is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.”

Accordingly, the Pharisees turn and cross-question the man. In so doing, they assume the attitude of authority and of superior knowledge.—“We know,”—we have information,—“that this man” (Jesus, that is,) “is a sinner.” The man replies, in effect;—“I know nothing as to what information you may have touching this Man of whom

you speak. 'This only I know; that, whereas I was blind, now I see.' The Pharisees now return with a subtle and well-directed effort to turn aside this man's testimony and make it ineffective. If they cannot overthrow it, perhaps they can rob it of its force and effectiveness, so far as the claims of Jesus of Nazareth are concerned. "Give *God* the praise for your cure," they say. "Can you not say that it is *God* who has healed you, and let it go at that? Why must you bring in the name of *Jesus* in this connection?" Back comes the honest and loyal answer:—"I cannot be true to God without being true to my Deliverer. I cannot but acknowledge that it is *He who is called Jesus* that has healed me of my blindness."

Still further the Pharisees question him,—not sincerely, but simply in order to shake him, if possible, from his position. Seeing the hypocrisy of it all, and impatient with his inquisitors, the man exclaims,— "Why would ye hear it all over again? Is it that *you* wish to become His disciples?" And now the scorn and anger of the Pharisees breaks out:—" *Thou* art his disciple; *we* are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this (fellow), we know not from whence he is." But now the man,—his back against the wall,—turns boldly upon his questioners. His loyalty to his Deliverer, developed by opposition, leads him on to vindicate the character of Jesus. He becomes aggressive in his testimony; he "carries the war into the enemies' country."—"Why, herein is a marvellous thing. You know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened my eyes! There is one thing of which we must all be assured;—*God does not hear sinners*. Another thing:—if this Man were not of

God, he could do nothing." Here is the logic of honest common-sense as against the sophistications of the scribes of Law. But now the scorn and anger of his assailants bursts through all bounds. "What! thou, who wast altogether born in sins,—dost *thou* teach *us*?" And they cast him out. Henceforward, he is to be a "soul cut off from Israel." An outcast from the synagogue, expelled from the "commonwealth of Israel," the man is left alone. His parents have cast him off; his friends have abandoned him; his Church and nation have rejected him. But there is One who has not forgotten him. Jesus seeks him out and finds him. Having found him, He addresses to him at once the all-searching, all-important question;—"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Jesus does not question the man concerning his temporal affairs or circumstances,—desperate as these seem to be. The one question which outweighs all else in its importance,—in its implications not only for time but for eternity,—is this:—"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" Willingness to accept whatever his Deliverer may say to him is evinced by this simple-hearted question. At once the answer comes;—"Thou hast both seen him, and he it is who talketh with thee." "Lord, I believe." "And he worshipped him."

So ends the story of the man whose sight Jesus restored. We are told nothing as to his further history; we know nothing of the circumstances of his life thereafter. We know not whether his lot was one of prosperity or of adversity, from the worldly point of view. We do know this:—that he had found the "pearl of great price," without which

life is of no positive or abiding value. He possessed the one great gift of spiritual vision,—an abiding faith in Jesus Christ. Reviewing his story, we see how sincerity and honesty lead on to *faith*, and how faith leads on to *worship*. We have traced the process of the development of spiritual vision in the case of an individual human soul. Loyalty to Jesus as He has already manifested Himself in our personal experience leads on to clearer and fuller recognition of Him. How many a soul has been led along the same path as this man was;—the path which leads through recognition of Jesus as the righteous, the perfect Man, to recognition of Him as the Son of God and the true Light of the world. It was for this that that man's sight was restored; it was for this that his story has come down to us. That poor and ignorant son of the people had attained to the true light, while the learned Pharisees and rulers remained still in darkness. The whole situation is summed up in the words of Jesus:—"For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not may see, and that they which see may become blind."

Let us be loyal to the truth as it has already been revealed to us, and fuller vision will surely come.—“He that *willeth to do God's will* shall know of the doctrine,<sup>18</sup> whether it be of God” or whether the testimony of Jesus is merely human testimony. By obedience we learn. Sincerity and loyalty lead to ever clearer vision, to ever deeper faith. In the soul's pilgrimage faith itself shall at last give place to sight, in the day “when that which is perfect is come and that which is in part shall have been done away.”

<sup>18</sup> vii. 17 (see R.V.).



*IV. Lazarus Raised from the Dead; The Treachery of Judas.* (Chapters xi.—xiii.).

Lazarus,—not the beggar of our Lord's parable, who "lay at the rich man's gate, full of sores,"—but Lazarus of the Gospel history,—the friend of Jesus, the brother of Mary and Martha,—above all, the man whom Jesus raised from the dead,—he it is whose story we are now to consider. And then the connection of his story with the story of Judas,—of him who, for thirty pieces of silver, betrayed his Master.

But what real connection is there between these two men? Is there *any* connection, other than the fact that at the supper given in honour of Jesus in Bethany, shortly after Lazarus had been raised from the dead, he and Judas Iscariot sat at the same table? On that occasion, Martha presided over the serving of the meal, while Mary it was who anointed the feet of Jesus with the costly ointment. The part of Judas was to criticise Mary's act of homage and service as an unwarranted and needless waste.

But there was another and a far deeper connection between Lazarus and Judas Iscariot; and this lay in the fact that it was the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection which led,—we may almost say, *directly* led,—to the treacherous act of Judas in the betrayal of his Master. The sequence of these events will presently appear. First, however, let us briefly consider that miracle of the raising of Lazarus in its connection both with what had gone before and with what followed and resulted from it.

It is an interesting fact that there are just *three* miracles recorded by St. John as having been performed by our Lord in or near Jerusalem. Two of

these we have already considered; it is the third to which we now direct our attention. (1) First, was the healing of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda. This took place at about the end of the first year of our Lord's ministry, or, in other words, at the time of His "second" Passover. (2) Then, in the second half of the third year of His ministry,—probably in the autumn, shortly after the Feast of Tabernacles,—was the healing of the man born blind. (3) And finally, in the following winter,—while spring was drawing near, bringing with it the fourth and final Passover of our Lord's ministry,—came that third and crowning miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus.

These three "mighty works" form an ascending scale in the demonstration of the power of Jesus as the Son of God. The exhibition of Divine power becomes more striking with each successive "sign." For thirty-eight years the impotent man had suffered;—the blind man from his birth. But Lazarus had actually been four days dead. Again;—we observe in these three cases a growing intimacy of personal relation with the Saviour. To the impotent man, when He had found him in the Temple, Jesus had said:—"Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."<sup>19</sup> The blind man, in response to Jesus' question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" replied, "Lord, I believe." "And he worshipped him."<sup>20</sup> Lazarus, however, belonged to the inner circle of our Lord's near and dear friends.<sup>21</sup> While the impotent man did not know, at first, who it was that had healed him; while the blind man knew Him only as "a

<sup>19</sup> v. 14.

<sup>20</sup> ix. 35, 38.

<sup>21</sup> xi. 5.

man that is called Jesus," Lazarus was on intimate terms both with our Lord and with His disciples.

Once more;—these three miracles in their order illustrate an ascending scale in the Self-manifestation of Christ. At Bethesda, He manifested Himself as the Source of power; in the case of the blind man He proves Himself the true Light of the world; and, finally, in summoning Lazarus from his tomb, Jesus reveals Himself as the Resurrection and the Life.

But now to turn to the story of the crowning miracle itself. As we read the narrative in the eleventh chapter of our Gospel, we are struck by the fact that Jesus did not at first respond to the message that Martha had sent Him;—"Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." Having withdrawn beyond the river Jordan with His disciples after His last encounter with the Jews in the Temple at Jerusalem, Jesus still remained in that place for two whole days after Martha's message had been delivered to Him.<sup>22</sup> Through this (to her, unaccountable) tarrying of the Master, a sore trial came to Martha's faith. When, finally, Jesus did appear at Bethany with His disciples, Martha met Him with the somewhat reproachful greeting, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But our Lord, as we know, had a great and wonderful purpose in this delay. It was that the power and glory of God might be made more abundantly manifest. So it is that God sometimes withholds the direct and immediate answer to our prayers,—the answer that is in our minds and upon which we have set our hearts. But if we will only have patience and "tarry the Lord's leisure," we, like Martha, shall "see the

<sup>22</sup> xi. 6.

glory of God." The miracle of her brother's resurrection was a far greater thing than would have been the forestalling of his death.

And now, as to the *results* of this mightiest of all our Lord's miracles :—It is a fact that the resurrection of Lazarus led directly to the final crisis and to the tragedy of the Cross :—so profound and far-reaching was its effect. The calling of Lazarus out of his grave had a force, an effect which may be compared with that of some great subterranean upheaval. The earthquake may give rise to a tidal wave ; or,—to carry the thought a little further,—it may be that two distinct currents, running in opposite directions, are its result. Such an effect in the physical world would parallel the results which, in the moral and spiritual sphere, followed from the resurrection of Lazarus. On the one hand, this miracle at once gave rise to a mighty wave of popular enthusiasm for the great Prophet of Nazareth. On the other hand, however, this same event led to the assembling of a council of the Jewish authorities which issued in their determination to put Him to death without further delay. This decision was voiced in that prophetic word of Caiaphas, who was "high priest that same year" :—  
"It is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."<sup>23</sup> It is the enthusiasm of the people for Him who is able even to bring the dead to life which explains the popular demonstration of Palm Sunday, while it was this very situation that brought to a head the opposition to Jesus on the part of His enemies. It was the treacherous act of Judas which enabled the chief priests and rulers to accomplish their purpose.

<sup>23</sup> xi. 50.

Here lies the connection between the resurrection of Lazarus and the betrayal of his Master on the part of Judas Iscariot.

That is a sublime passage with which the final section of St. John's Gospel opens (chapter xiii. 1, fol.):—

“Now before the feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come forth from God, and was going (back) unto God, . . . he riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments, and he took a towel and girded himself,” and then proceeded to “wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.”

What contrasts are brought before us in this brief passage!—what Divine condescension is here expressed!—what Self-emptying, reminding us of His original act of Self-humiliation when (in His Incarnation) He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.”<sup>24</sup> Royal majesty, as of One come forth from God into the world, and now about to return to Him who had sent Him: . . . and then that act of lowliest condescension and humility in washing the feet of His disciples! This act foreshows and indicates the spirit in which He is about to undergo,—freely and voluntarily,—the

<sup>24</sup> Phil. ii. 7.

shame and ignominy of the Cross. The incident is recorded by St. John alone among the Evangelists, although, in St. Luke's narrative, our Lord distinctly refers to it, in the words,—spoken at that last Supper,—“ I am among you as he that serveth.”<sup>25</sup>

And then Jesus immediately proceeds to point out the application and the lesson of that which He had just been doing. The disciples are bound to follow their Master's example, for “ the servant is not greater than his lord.” Hereby they must prove themselves His “ servants ” if hereafter they would be called His “ friends.”<sup>26</sup> Loyalty to their Master imposes upon them this obligation;—to hold themselves in readiness to perform the lowliest acts of service, each for the other.—“ So shall ye be my disciples.”

And now the Master proceeds in those penetrating and heart-searching words :—“ I am not speaking of *all* of you,” (when I call you my “ disciples ”). “ I know who they are whom I have chosen;—but (—that the Scripture may be fulfilled)—he that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me.”<sup>27</sup> Jesus had predicted His betrayal no less than a year before, and had even intimated where the traitor was to come from;—that he was to be one of the chosen band of the apostles.

Here is a mystery pertaining to the consciousness of Jesus, in relation to His choice of Judas at the beginning;—a mystery which we cannot fully penetrate. St. John has put on record an utterance of our Lord, made just after that discourse uttered in the synagogue at Capernaum in which He had spoken of Himself as “ the Bread that had come

<sup>25</sup> Lu. xxii. 27.

<sup>27</sup> xiii. 18.

<sup>26</sup> Cp. xiii. 16 with xv. 15.



down from heaven, to give life unto the world." On that occasion, the great bulk of His followers,—unable to accept these words of His about Himself,—had "gone back, and walked no more with him." Jesus had then turned and had said to the Twelve,— "Will ye also go away?" They were free to leave Him, just as they had been free to follow Him at the beginning. Then it was that Peter had made reply,— "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." The response of Jesus had indeed been one to arouse searchings of heart in the breasts of His followers,—even of these, the faithful few:—"Have not I chosen you, the Twelve? and one of you is a devil."<sup>28</sup> Jesus had already said to the throng of His followers:—"There are some of you that believe not." "For," as the Evangelist goes on to explain,— "*Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.*" These words open up the mystery of the Divine foreknowledge, into the depths of which we may not penetrate. We know this:—*Jesus chose Judas*. As Divine Son of God, Jesus could not be deceived. He knew all; He knew what was in man. Surely He knew the heart of each one of His disciples through and through when, at the first, He chose them and bade them follow Him. Doubtless He had a special purpose in view in connection with each one of them. So our thoughts must run, from the standpoint of His Divine consciousness. But from another,—the human view-point, we must recognise and ever keep clearly before us this fact;—The disciples, on their part, were equally free either to

<sup>28</sup> Chapter vi., especially vss. 66—70.

follow Him or not to follow Him. Their discipleship was a matter of their own personal choice. It is just here that the human will, and, with it, human responsibility, comes in. Jesus compelled no man to follow Him.

When we come to the case of Judas, it is a significant fact that Judas remained—he did not depart with the crowd after that critical moment in the synagogue at Capernaum. What was in his heart at that time? what was his motive in remaining? These questions,—and questions like them,—we must perforce leave where the Word of God leaves them. But for us there is in the case of this man the solemn warning;—that in proportion as any man yields to evil, in just that proportion he develops a greater capacity for evil. In the case of Judas, the evil evidently was,—cupidity. The love of money grew just in the measure that the love of goodness and of truth lessened and dwindled. St. Luke and St. John both tell us when it was that Judas actually resolved upon the act of betrayal. It was during that last week,—the week that followed Palm Sunday. It was *after* the council held in consequence of the raising of Lazarus, when the Jewish rulers had, as a body, definitely decided upon the death of Jesus. Not until then had the time become ripe for the act of treachery. To the external “ripeness” of circumstance corresponds an inward maturity of evil in the heart of Judas himself. Satan, to whom Judas had already yielded, now takes occasion to “enter his heart,” and to inspire and fill him with that wicked purpose.<sup>29</sup> I suppose even Judas could not actually have brought himself to do the deed, had not the Evil One thus “entered his heart.”

<sup>29</sup> Lu. xxii. 3; cp. Jno. xiii. 2.

At the same time, it was by repeated acts of sin,—of dishonesty, of falsification,—that Judas had made it possible for Satan thus to enter and take possession of his soul. He had himself encouraged and invited Satan's coming. There are, in the whole Gospel, no more solemn words than those that Jesus uttered at that last Supper;—"The Son of Man indeed goeth as it is written of him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed; good were it for that man if he had never been born."<sup>30</sup>

We have observed how, after washing the feet of the disciples, Jesus had said,—"*Ye are clean; but not all of you. I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled*" (long ago written)—"*He that eateth my bread hath lifted up his heel against me.*"<sup>31</sup> Think of the Divine condescension and restraint on the part of the Master in washing *Judas'* feet!

After He had spoken these words, we are told that Jesus became "troubled in spirit, and he testified and said, One of you shall betray me." Then it was that Judas, "having received the sop, went immediately out; *and it was night.*" . . . That dramatic touch,—"*And it was night!*" Physical darkness, symbolising the deeper darkness of the soul, wrought by sin.

With Judas' departure, the atmosphere at once cleared; and what a weight must now have been lifted from the heart of Jesus Himself! We seem to feel the sense of relief breathing in His words

<sup>30</sup> Matt. xxvi. 24; Mk. xiv. 21.

<sup>31</sup> The passage to which our Lord refers is taken from the forty-first Psalm, and is as follows:—

"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."

which immediately followed the exit of the traitor;—"Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." And then, "*Little children*" . . . this is the first and the only time that we read of the Master's using this term of endearment in the whole Gospel story,—"*Little children, I am with you yet for a little while; and,—as I said to the Jews,—Whither I go, ye cannot come,—so now I say it to you.*"

And then it is that the Lord proceeds;—"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." Judas being no longer present, Jesus can now speak freely and unrestrainedly of love, and, in so speaking, can lay down the law of His kingdom. And then the Master goes on with that matchless expression of spiritual truth,—of truth so deeply personal and intimate in its bearings,—as recorded in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of St. John,—all culminating in that wonderful prayer of the Divine Son to His Father, in chapter seventeen.

With these we are to deal in the concluding chapter of this book. Suffice it now to say that in this whole wonderful passage we find our Lord unfolding,—first by *deed*, and then by *word*,—that which is the fundamental law of His kingdom,—the law of *humility* and the law of *love*.

"Verily, verily I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent, greater than he that sent him. . . . I am among you as he that serveth."

The revelation of love made at that Last Supper manifests the same vital and all-conquering power

which, at the grave of Lazarus, had summoned the dead man from his tomb.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SELF-REVELATION AS SEEN IN THE "I AM'S" OF JESUS CHRIST.

OUR subject is the Self-revelation of our Lord as this is presented to us in the Gospel of St. John. As we have seen, this is not so much a Gospel of the Kingdom as it is a Revelation of the Person. What are elsewhere set forth as "mighty works,"—the miracles,—are here but "signs" pointing to Himself in one or another of His characters as Redeemer and Saviour. If He restores sight to the blind man, it is to show that He is Himself the Light. If He feeds the multitude with the loaves, it is to manifest Himself as the Bread of Life.

Moreover, instead of the parables of the Kingdom,—such as the "Sower and the Seed," the "Leaven," the "Mustard-Seed,"—we have in St. John's Gospel direct discourses in which our Lord tells of Himself and of His mission,—while yet, at the same time, He refers everything to the Father, who has sent Him. In these discourses,—so characteristic of the Fourth Gospel,—there are certain great affirmations, which shine out like stars. In these, our Lord's Self-revelation is concentrated and, as it were, focalised. We find Him saying,—  
"I am the Door,"—"I am the Good Shepherd,"—"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." These great truths which our Lord thus affirms of Himself are illustrated and amplified in the discourses in which they occur, as well as by the accompanying "signs" which He wrought in the sight of the



people. We are to consider the discourses, however, later on. Just now, let us think for a little of those great self-affirmations in which we may see and recognise our Lord's supreme revelation of Himself. We are to consider the "I Am's" of Jesus Christ. Of these there are nine in the Gospel of St. John, and they are as follows:—

I am—the Bread of Life;  
—the Light of the World;  
—the Door of the Sheep;  
—the Good Shepherd;  
—the Resurrection and  
—the Life;  
—the Way and  
—the Truth (and the Life);  
—the True Vine.

We may distinguish between these great titles which our Lord claims for Himself, and which mark Him out as Sovereign in the spiritual world. Some of them may be regarded as "temporal" or "relative" epithets; others are unmistakably recognised as bearing witness to Him in His *eternal* being and character. For example, our Lord was not always the "true Vine," inasmuch as the "vine" necessarily includes the "branches," and that implies the existence of the disciples,—in other words, of His Church. The Church was not from eternity, save in the purpose and foreknowledge of God. This figure of the Vine, then, may be called a *relative* description of our Lord; it was fulfilled when His Church had become an accomplished fact. So, too, with the "Door of the Sheep," with the "Bread of Life" and with the "Resurrection." These clearly imply the existence of our Lord's humanity; they awaited their fulfilment *in time*.

But there are other names and titles of Jesus Christ which just as clearly imply *eternity*; they reveal Him as the Unchanging One. Such are:— (1) the *Truth*; for truth, as such, is eternal; (2) the *Light*; for that Light had no beginning save in God. To say that He is “Light from Light” is only another way of saying that He is “God from (or out of) God.” These two affirmations made of Him in the Nicene Creed are practically equivalent. It is another way of saying that He, as the eternal Son, is “begotten of His Father (from) before all worlds.” Again, (3) to say that He is “the Life” means no other than that He is *the Life eternal*. Life is not something abstract; something apart from Him. If God did not exist, there would be no eternal life,—no created life,—in fact, no life at all. Life is alone from Him. Again, if God did not exist, there could be no such thing as eternal and unchanging *truth*. Truth is not an abstraction; something independent of God. He is *the God of truth*; truth itself exists because of the existence of the Eternal One: it is grounded in Him; it is, indeed, the law of His Being. Truth, accordingly, has a personal basis; it cannot be divorced from Him who is the Truth. It is in this attitude towards truth, it is in this conception of truth that the Christian is distinguished from the mere philosopher. The latter conceives of truth as an *idea* or as a *proposition*; the former visualises Truth as a Person.

And this brings us back again to the fact that the Gospel, as interpreted by St. John, is intensely personal. Its meaning and purpose is simply that of *bearing witness to Jesus Christ*. Personality, we repeat, is an essential element in this Gospel, giving it its distinctive character. This being so, a religion

which, like Buddhism, is anti-personal, can never be reconciled with the religion of Jesus Christ. We may affirm, moreover, that an *impersonal* doctrine, such as any system of philosophy must necessarily be, inevitably falls short of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus. We go even further, and affirm that any doctrine or form of Christianity (so-called) which subordinates the Person of Jesus to the conception of *truth*,—to an abstract law of Right or to abstract theory or speculation of any kind, is not the true and genuine Gospel of Jesus Christ; it can never be brought into harmony with that Gospel, especially as interpreted by St. John. For this Gospel of John puts Jesus *absolutely in the centre*. There is nothing beyond Him or above Him,—save only that, as Son, Jesus is the Minister and Interpreter of God the Father who has sent Him and whom He has come to reveal.

We have in this principle a touch-stone by which we may test those various systems of religious thought which are offered for our acceptance to-day. For example, the teaching known as Unitarianism, as expounded by Dr. Channing, and, later, by Theodore Parker, as well as that by-product known as New-England Transcendentalism in its various forms, did and does subordinate Jesus to an idea or a system, whether of speculative “truth” or of “ethics.”

The same judgment must be passed upon “Christian Science,” which is the most popular, widespread and influential form of applied “transcendental” philosophy as we see it at the present time. It is not unfair to say that according to “Christian Science” the historic Jesus with His teachings is sublimated or transformed into a

thought-idea or concept which, while it may be represented as the "Spirit of Christ," is, as a matter of fact, simply impersonal Mind. But the important thing to notice here is that this impersonal and universal Mind is embodied in the "ego" of the individual disciple, or, rather, in that representative "ego" of the Foundress and Mother of the system. It is *her* word (as set forth in "Science and Health") that is recognised as the ultimate standard of authority for "all believers."

Now all these various systems whether of religion or of philosophy—Unitarianism, with its by-products, Emersonianism, and, in the next generation, "Christian Science,"—agree in this: that (to a greater or lesser degree) they minimise the central and all-determining authority of the Person of Jesus. For His personality is necessarily limited, His moral and spiritual significance is restricted if He be represented simply as a Teacher. And this is the case, in whatever sense His teaching may be interpreted;—whether as that of "the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man," or, again, as that of the universal metaphysical reality of health and the nullity of pain, disease and death. Whatever may be the character of the teaching presented, Jesus thus appears but as an instrument or agent of the doctrine,—not as Himself the Centre and Source of Divine authority; He is but another Socrates, or Plato, or Confucius. Or even if He is held to be greater than these,—greater and better than any other of the sons of men,—He must still be regarded as being *less than that truth* which He came to teach and to exemplify by His life and death.

In contrast, then, with each and all of these doctrines to which we have referred, the Gospel of

St. John, as we have seen, *identifies Jesus with the truth itself*. For according to the testimony of this Gospel, Jesus makes the supreme and absolute claim to be no other than "the Way, the Truth and the Life." It is true that in recent years there has been a certain reaction within Unitarian circles in the direction of laying greater emphasis upon personality, and that this tendency is more or less in evidence in the Unitarianism of the present time. Nevertheless, it cannot be doubted that if the movement initiated by Channing be allowed to run to its full extent, it must inevitably weaken not only our apprehension of the authority of Jesus, but must ultimately obscure our apprehension of the personality of God Himself. It is to be feared that through the influence of these and other like forms of modern teaching there are many young men and young women in our colleges to-day who have lost all definite belief in a personal God. God is not a Being to whom they are aware of sustaining any personal relation whatever. This only confirms the truth of our Lord's words, where, in immediate connection with His claim to be "the Way and the Truth and the Life," He goes on to affirm that "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." To have our hold weakened upon His central and sovereign Personality must sooner or later lead to a weakening of our faith in a personal God. But as to the witness of this Gospel of John, at any rate, there is no manner of doubt. God is the supreme Personality; and from Him cannot be dissevered or disassociated the Being who declares "I and the Father are one," and "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Thus, finally, we are led to the last step:—The

“ I Am’s ” of Jesus Christ become the I AM;—they culminate in the ultimate fact,—they lead us on to the recognition of the supreme truth that not only is Jesus *one* with GOD;—He is GOD Himself. It is not only that “ the Word was *with* GOD,”—that He existed from eternity *in relation to* GOD—as the Son in the bosom of the Father—but that (as St. John goes on to say) “ the Word *was* ” (and *is*) “ GOD.” For if He ever *was* GOD, it is evident that He must be GOD *now*; He must be GOD unto eternity. And this is, in effect, what our Lord testifies when He says to the Jews,—“ Before Abraham was,”—before Abraham came into existence,<sup>1</sup>—“ I AM.”<sup>2</sup> This is the supreme affirmation of Jesus in His Self-revelation.

What, then, we ask, is the purpose of these mighty Self-affirmations of Jesus, so far as we personally are concerned? The answer is given at the conclusion of this book:—“ These are written *that ye may believe* ” (xx. 31). The purpose of this Gospel of St. John is an eminently practical one;—to evoke the response of faith in Him who is here presented to us. If faith in Jesus as the Son of God, as the supreme Personality, is not evoked, then this Gospel has been written in vain.

And now, in connection with the various instances of our Lord’s self-affirmation, we shall be logically led on to remark,—in chapters which are to follow,—the twofold reaction in which His message re-

<sup>1</sup> πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι, Jno. viii. 58.

<sup>2</sup> “ I AM ” is the Name under which God revealed Himself to Moses (Exod. iii. 13—15). It is rendered by the Name “ Jehovah ” in the English Bible, or by the capitalised Name LORD.



sulted. On the one hand, there was the response of faith; on the other, the opposition,—culminating in overt and murderous hostility,—of unbelief. Christ's word was, and is, a two-edged sword, cutting both ways. So it is with the testimony of those who truly proclaim Him. To those who hear and believe that word, says St. Paul, "we are a savour of life unto life," but to those who disbelieve and resist, a savour of "death unto death."<sup>3</sup> And thus, through the history of the Self-affirmation of Jesus and of the twofold response which it evoked, we are led on to the concluding act in the sublime drama of that Divine yet human life,—the tragedy, touched with glory, of the Cross, and the triumph of the Resurrection. It is in these that faith finds its final testing and its confirmation. That Cross was set for "the fall and rising again of many." Not only is it the revelation of the heart of God; it is a touchstone of the hearts and souls of men;—"that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."<sup>4</sup> What, then, is your response,—what is mine,—to the message of His Person, to the message of His Cross? Herein lies the key to every man's future, whether for weal or for woe; whether for time or for eternity.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Lu. ii. 34, 35.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE SELF-REVELATION AS SEEN IN THE DISCOURSES OF JESUS.

WE have considered,—very briefly and inadequately,—the revelation of Himself made by our Lord in those great descriptive titles which may be called the “I Am’s” of Jesus:—“I am the Bread of Life,”—“I am the Door,” “I am the true Vine,” and the rest. We saw that these great titles (or Figures) by which our Lord describes Himself all either directly express or clearly imply and lead up to the truth of His *eternal* nature and Being,—His essential oneness with the Father.

But there was need of further explanation and application of this great fact of our Lord’s Divinity. Jesus came into the world to *bear witness to the truth*. To proclaim the truth about Himself was, as we have seen, an essential part of His mission. Now this proclamation He made in a remarkable series of discourses which are preserved for us in this Gospel of St. John, and are found nowhere else.

Suppose, for a moment, that our Lord were to come among us to-day,—in these days of worldliness, of materialism, of religious indifference. Suppose He were to appear among us in bodily and visible form and declare to us the truth about Himself. Would it not be arresting? would it not be a profoundly moving experience for all who should hear Him? But this is precisely what He did in the days of His flesh. In the words of the apostle Paul,—“This thing was not done in a corner.” It

was in Jerusalem that most of these great discourses which St. John has reported for us were delivered. It was in the Holy City, and it was (for the most part) at the time of one or another of those great feasts which brought so many thousands to Jerusalem, not only from the length and breadth of the Holy Land itself, but from all parts of the Roman world as well. It was in the Temple courts, or in some part of the Temple precincts, such as, for example, the treasury, that these great Discourses were delivered. It is this setting, and it is the circumstances under which they were uttered which impart to these words of Christ a most striking and dramatic character. The stage has, as it were, been set for the appearance of Jesus. In fact, He had Himself already prepared that stage by His act of cleansing the Temple, which, as St. John informs us, He did at the beginning of His public ministry.

The Synoptists,—St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke,—are only *apparently* at variance with St. John on this point, for,—unlike him,—they speak mainly of our Lord's ministry *outside of* Jerusalem and of Judæa; they tell us of His work in Galilee, or beyond the river Jordan. St. John, on the other hand, speaks chiefly of the ministry *in* Jerusalem, which extended (with intervals) over three years. The Synoptists, therefore, quite naturally tell of a cleansing of the Temple as having occurred at the beginning of Holy Week, before those last sayings of Jesus which then (and there) were uttered. St. John, on the other hand, tells of that antecedent cleansing,—the first,—which took place *at the beginning* of the three years' ministry.

Let us suppose, for a moment, that the Temple courts had *not* been cleansed until the very end of

our Lord's public work. How then could He have delivered His great discourses there? Evidently, He must first create or restore *the religious atmosphere* of the place,—the atmosphere fitting to the House of Prayer, but for which men had substituted the clamour and confusion of the market-place. Had not this necessary work of preparation been done, our Lord's words must have failed of their effect.

I have spoken of the *dramatic* note in these great utterances of our Lord, taken in conjunction with the circumstances under which they were delivered. Take, for example, that word of His,—spoken at the Feast of Tabernacles,—about the “living water.”<sup>1</sup> Edersheim has described for us<sup>2</sup> the picturesque and impressive ceremony of the drawing of the water from the Pool of Siloam, and its ritual pouring out as a libation upon the great altar of burnt-offering in the court of the Temple. This was understood as being illustrative of the prophetic saying,—“With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” The ceremony was as follows :—A priest, carrying a golden pitcher, and followed by a procession of worshippers, descended from the Temple area to the Pool of Siloam, and filled his pitcher there. Returning to the Temple in solemn procession, he poured out the water in connection with the drink-offering of wine; the ceremony being concluded with the chanting of the “Hallel,”—a selection of Psalms (cxiii.—cxviii.) of festive thanksgiving and rejoicing. That ritual act of libation was understood as symbolising the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And it was during a dramatic pause in the service,—immediately after

<sup>1</sup> vii. 37—39.

<sup>2</sup> *Life and Times of the Messiah*, Vol. II., p. 156, fol.

the pouring of the drink-offering and the chanting of the "Hallel,"—when silence had for a brief space fallen upon the multitude there gathered in the Temple courts, that Jesus, raising His voice, cried aloud,—“If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” What could have been more dramatic,—say rather, more strikingly impressive? or under what circumstances could those words of His have been more effectively delivered? Those who heard those words of Jesus on that last “great day of the feast,”—at the climax of that festival of seven days,—could surely never have forgotten them.

We can only speak briefly of these great public Discourses of our Lord. In order to be appreciated, they must be studied in the concise reports which St. John himself has left for us. The themes of these Discourses may be indicated as follows:—

- I. “My Work” (ch. v.).
- II. “The Bread of Life” (ch. vi.).
- III. “The Living Water” (ch. vii.).
- IV. “The Light of the World” (ch. viii.).
- V. “The Good Shepherd” (ch. x.).
- VI. “The Hour is Come” (ch. xii.).

These are followed by the Evangelist’s Retrospect (in ch. xii. vss. 37—43), and then by his Summary of the Message of the Discourses in the words of Jesus Himself.

These great sermons of our Lord sometimes had as their point of departure a miracle, or, to use the expression of Jesus, a “work”; but in one case it is the *word* of Jesus which is seen as the point of departure of the miracle; the “sign” is wrought to illustrate and confirm the word of Jesus. The instance here referred to is that of the healing of

the man born blind (in chapter ix.). This man's case,—both his congenital blindness and its healing,—had been providentially ordered to illustrate and emphasise the truth of that saying of Christ,—already spoken, before the cure was wrought,—“I am the Light of the world.” For this blindness had not come to pass on account of the sin of the man himself, or of his parents. It was in order “that the works of God should be made manifest in him”; in order that Christ might be declared as the true “Light of the world.”

(1.) But in other cases it is the “work” which precedes the “word.” First, Jesus acts,—and then interprets this act as reflecting its light upon His Person. An instance of this is seen in the healing of the paralytic on the Sabbath day at the Pool of Bethesda (in chapter v.), of which we have already spoken.<sup>3</sup> This is the occasion of<sup>3</sup> the first long discourse, which, as introductory to the series of discourses, is very comprehensive. Taking this particular work of healing as His point of departure, our Lord goes on to speak of His work in general;—of His mission, and, in connection with that, of His relation to the Father. For the Jews had called in question both this “work” of His, and His relation to God. “This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day.” At once Jesus proceeds to the tremendous affirmation not only that *creative* power belongs to Him, even as to the Father, but that universal judgment (which presupposes the resurrection of all men from the dead) is committed unto the Son, in order that all men should honour Him, even as they do the Father. Those who believe upon God through Him have *already* life everlast-

<sup>3</sup> See above, pp. 38—46.



ing, and "come not into judgment." There is a resurrection unto *life*; there is also a resurrection unto *judgment*. The work of the Son, in judgment as also in creation and in providence, is but a following of the work of the Father; it is the outward manifestation and counterpart of that which is done by the invisible God.

Having made these great affirmations concerning Himself and His mission both in the world now present and in the world to come, Jesus turns and cites those various witnesses who testify of Him. These are (1) John the Baptist; (2) His own works and deeds; (3) the Father Himself, who has sent Him; (4) the Old Testament Scriptures, and, in particular, the writings of Moses, the great Legislator and Founder, to whose authority the Jews were always appealing.

This first Discourse, then, appears as a general proclamation on the part of Jesus, touching His mission,—with its twofold purpose of judgment and of salvation,—His relation to the Father, and His credentials for His work. Throughout the entire Discourse,—as in all His Discourses (as reported by St. John),—it is the Personality of Jesus which is of central and pivotal importance. This, then, is our Lord's introductory declaration, spoken to the people at large, including both His friends and His enemies. For it lies upon the surface of the narrative that He had, even from the beginning, determined enemies as well as devoted disciples. This utterance was made in Jerusalem, at the time of one of the great religious festivals, and, no doubt, in the Temple.

(2.) The second Discourse was that concerning the Bread of Life. Its point of departure was, of

course, the feeding of the five thousand, which had just taken place in a desert spot near the lake of Galilee. The Discourse itself, however, was delivered in the synagogue at Capernaum; its time synchronised with the Feast of the Passover. In this latter fact there is a profound significance, inasmuch as Jesus here speaks of giving His flesh and His blood "for the life of the world." Here already is an indirect, though distinct intimation of His approaching death; although that death was not to take place until a year later; i.e., at the next annual Paschal season. There is a deep inner connection between the Passover ordinance and the sacrifice which Jesus was to make of Himself. As the flesh of the paschal lamb was partaken of by the worshippers, so Jesus will give Himself,—His own flesh and blood,—to be the spiritual Food of all those who come to Him in faith.

(3.) Upon the third Discourse (ch. vii. 14—39) we have already touched. It was uttered at intervals during the Feast of Tabernacles,—six months before the final scenes of our Lord's Passion and death. To the latter event Jesus makes reference, (although indirectly, as before), saying to the Jews:—"Yet a little while am I with you, and (then) I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, ye cannot come." He reaffirms His mission from the Father. He remonstrates with the Jews who were criticising Him and were even seeking to kill Him, particularly on account of the "work" which He had wrought in healing the impotent man on the Sabbath day. But the climax of our Lord's teaching on this occasion is seen in that utterance of His to which we have already referred as having been spoken on the last

“great day of the feast”:—“If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me (as the Scripture hath said) out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” “But this spake he,”—as St. John goes on to explain,—“this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive. For the Spirit was not yet (given) because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Here is the distinct promise of the great Gift of the Holy Spirit,—foretold in prophecy long before, but now for the first time uttered by our Lord in one of these public Discourses, as recorded by St. John. The promise is to be repeated and amplified in the private interview which Jesus will hold with His immediate disciples in the “upper room,” on the night before His final sufferings and death. We may, then, fairly characterise this third Discourse from this promise of the Divine Spirit, and speak of it as the “Discourse of the Living Water.”

(4.) We now come to the Discourse of most intense opposition (chapter viii., vs. 12—59) which is at the same time the occasion on which Jesus first makes distinct intimation of His death and of the manner thereof, in the words,—“When ye have lifted up the Son of Man . . .” This Discourse also was delivered in the Temple. The clash between Jesus and His enemies is most strongly and vividly expressed in a series of antitheses, uttered, as we shall see, by the Master’s own lips. But the general text and theme of the Discourse is seen in the great utterance “I am the Light of the World.” (Later on,—that is, in the following chapter,—this claim of our Lord’s is to receive confirmation by His act of healing the man born blind, which we have already considered.) Our Lord now openly challenges

the Jews,—in whom He clearly recognises His mortal enemies,—in the boldest and most sweeping terms. Here are some of the striking antitheses by which He shows that He reads the hearts and discerns the purpose of His foes:—"Ye are from beneath; I am from above." . . . "Ye are of your father, the Devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do."<sup>4</sup> He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth because there is no truth in him. . . . Because ye are not of God" (this is the reason that) "ye hear not God's words." . . . "Ye seek to kill me, a man who hath told you the truth which I heard from God" . . . who sent me. . . . Your claim to be Abraham's children is a false one, for ye do not "the works of Abraham." What I say unto you is nevertheless the truth:—"If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death." Here the Jews take Him up with the question:—"Art thou, then, greater than our father Abraham who is dead? to say nothing of the prophets, who are dead also? Whom makest thou thyself?" The answer comes as a bolt from heaven:—"Verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I AM."

The Jews can bear no more; they take up stones to cast at Him, but Jesus now hides Himself, and goes out of the Temple, even as the Shekinah of old was seen to depart from the Holy Place in the vision of the prophet Ezekiel.<sup>5</sup>

Our Lord's "hiding Himself" at the close of this climactic "Discourse of opposition" leads us to speak of the "exits" of Jesus Christ,—especially

<sup>4</sup> θέλετε ποιεῖν.

<sup>5</sup> Ezek. x. 18; xi. 23.

after one or another of His great Discourses. These exits are strikingly dramatic, as depicted by St. John. It is true that the Synoptists tell of certain withdrawals of Jesus from the presence of the multitude, or, again, even from the presence of the disciples. They tell us of His retirement into the wilderness for the forty days of the Temptation; they speak of His all-night vigil upon the mountain-top on the eve of His appointing the twelve Apostles. But St. John does not need to emphasise these withdrawals, for the Christ, as he depicts Him, even among His disciples, in close and intimate fellowship day by day, still remains a Mystery, albeit a Self-revealing Mystery. Even that great prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter wherein, if anywhere, heavenly heights are scaled, was uttered by our Lord not in solitude, but in the presence of His disciples. The veil is withdrawn, and they are permitted to behold the eternal Son in communion with His Father,—a pledge that this communion of His shall one day be theirs also. But it is St. John who tells us that at the close of one or another of the public discourses of Jesus the veil suddenly falls, and hides Him from the sight of those whom He had confronted. Each of these exits of Jesus is an anticipation of His final departure from these earthly scenes, and of His return into that invisible world of the spirit from which He had come. “Yet a little while is the light with you. . . . While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light.” Such was our Lord’s warning to those whom He addressed, on the eve of His departure to the presence of the Father.

(5.) So we come to the fifth Discourse,—the

Discourse of the Good Shepherd. Here again, as on the occasion of the fourth Discourse, we see the Jews attempting to seize Him, with murderous intent. But He goes forth out of their hands, and this time departs again "beyond Jordan, into the place where John was at the first baptising, and there he abode" (x. 39, 40). In this discourse of the Good Shepherd, our Lord goes a step farther, in speaking of His death. He brings out the fact that His death is to be a voluntary one. He is not to be the passive victim of circumstances; He is not to be the helpless prey of His enemies. He will go forth to meet His death freely and of His own accord. It is because the Father has bidden Him; not because men shall force Him to submit to their will.—"No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father" (x. 18). It is the Good Shepherd who is about to lay down His life for the sheep. His death is for the redemption and deliverance of those whom the Father hath given Him; He dies that they may live. Jesus here speaks of "my sheep," and also of "other sheep" which He has,—"*not of this fold,*"—thus referring to the world-wide character of His mission. This last truth is to be brought out yet more clearly in the final Discourse, wherein our Lord compares Himself to the "corn of wheat" which, falling into the ground, and losing its individual life, shall yet bring forth an abundant harvest, in the "drawing of all men unto him" (xii. 24, 32). But on this occasion,—that is, in the *fifth* Discourse,—our Lord tells the unbelieving Jews that they are not of His sheep. And then He proceeds to those great affirmations—



(the same affirmation in two different forms)—“I and the Father are one”; “the Father is in me, and I (am) in the Father”; thus reaffirming His essential Godhead in opposition to the cavils and the attacks of unbelief. This is the climax of the fifth Discourse, as “Before Abraham was I AM” was the climax of the fourth.<sup>6</sup>

(6.) And now we come to the last of the public Discourses of Jesus, as reported by St. John. This was uttered immediately before the end, and bears clearer witness than any of those which had preceded it to the approaching sacrifice of the Cross;—to the death and to the resurrection whereby He, the “Son of Man,” was to be “glorified.” As we have just seen, this last of our Lord’s Discourses deals with the *effect* of the approaching crisis of His death in its harvest of spiritual fruitfulness, through the drawing and compelling power of that love which was about to give itself to the uttermost, for God and for His fellow men:—“Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

This law of Christ’s sacrifice is, moreover, enunciated as the law for each and all of His fol-

<sup>6</sup> It is worthy of remark in this connection that the “three texts” which seemed to St. Athanasius most clearly and convincingly to point to the essential and eternal Divinity of Christ are all found in this Fourth Gospel; two of them are those which we have just noted in this fifth Discourse;—“I and the Father are one”; “The Father is in me, and I in him.” The third of these great utterances occurs during the conversation in the Upper Room (xiv. 9), and was in response to Philip’s earnest entreaty;—“Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” Jesus answered:—“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

lowers; they too shall serve and suffer after His example:—"He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will the Father honour." Then follows that final appeal to which we have already referred:—"Yet a little while is the light with you. . . While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light." And then the curtain falls, and Jesus makes His final exit, so far as His public utterances before the multitude are concerned:—"These things spake Jesus, and he departed and hid himself from them."<sup>8</sup> His final appeal for obedience to the Divine message has now been made; the sun is about to set upon the horizon of our Lord's earthly life. He Himself, the true Sun in the moral firmament, is about to be hidden from mortal view, although He is to reappear before the cleansed and spiritual vision of His disciples. This last assurance He will give to those whom He calls not only His "servants," but His "friends" in that precious conversation in the Upper Room which comes as the sequel to our Lord's public Discourses,—as the crown and the completion of them all. There, in the intimacy of fellowship with "His own," all shock or strain of opposition shall have ceased, and the tides of spiritual fellowship will have free course. But so far as the public Discourses of Jesus,—delivered "*urbi et orbi*,"—to the city and to the world,—are concerned, their end has now been reached. Throughout their course we trace two strands which bind them into one. There is the golden thread of

<sup>8</sup> xii. 25, 26.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* vs. 36b.

His Divinity; there is the scarlet thread of His sacrificial death for man's redemption. To both of these, the typology of the Old Testament Scriptures had pointed; in both it is fulfilled. The Son of God is the atoning Sacrifice for sin; He is the Life-bringer for all mankind,—for everyone who believes on His Name.

The Evangelist in retrospect now surveys the whole course of that public testimony of Jesus, with its reaction of unbelief on the part of the Jewish nation as a whole. This is explained as being in accordance with a Divine decree; for, in the case of those who are unwilling to yield to the claims of the truth when presented to them, their eyes become blind and their hearts are hardened. Thus is fulfilled the prophetic word of Isaiah (Isa. liii. 1; vi. 1—10) when he, of old, had seen Christ in vision and had testified of Him (xii. 37—41).

“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”—xii. 42, 43.

Then follows what may be called an epilogue to these Discourses, in the words of Jesus Himself,<sup>9</sup>—no doubt as the Evangelist had been led to gather and summarise them, taking them from utterances spoken at different times and on various occasions. We cannot do better than close our brief survey of these Discourses with this summing up of their great message in our Lord's own words; their solemn personal application let each one of us make for himself:

<sup>9</sup> xii. 44—50.

“ And Jesus cried and said,

He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that beholdeth me beholdeth him that sent me. I AM COME A LIGHT INTO THE WORLD, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness. And if any man hear my sayings and keep them not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings hath one that judgeth him;—the Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself, but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE RESPONSE OF FAITH TO THE REVELATION.

“As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God;—even to them that believe on his Name.”—*St. John i. 12.*

WE have now reviewed the Self-revelation of Christ (1) through several of those “Signs” or works of power by which He manifested Himself as Saviour and Enlightener of men; (2) through those unique Names or personal titles in which that Self-revelation is focalised and concentrated; and, lastly (3) we have briefly traced the progress of that revelation in those great Discourses which were delivered chiefly in Jerusalem, in the Temple courts. We have now to take account of the *response* on the part of men to this Self-revelation;—whether that response took the form of faith, or, on the other hand, of unbelief and opposition. For this is the fateful significance of that gift of self-determination with which men have once for all been endowed,—that by it they may either turn their faces towards the light, or may turn their backs upon it. The choice will depend upon whether, in the last analysis, a man really loves the light and welcomes it from his heart, or whether he prefers the darkness of error and of sin:—“Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved; but he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> iii. 20, 21.

The response of faith, in obedience and discipleship, is especially associated in our minds with the banks of the river Jordan, and the shores of the Lake of Galilee. There it was that our Lord's first disciples followed Him. It was on a mountain in Galilee that our Lord first called the Twelve, appointing them to be His "Apostles." On the other hand, the deliberate and organised hostility to our Lord and to His claims is associated with Jerusalem. It was the Pharisees, together with the hierarchy, who held control of the Temple and directed the worship which there was offered who, from the first, set themselves against Him.

Now when we consider that little group of men who, at the beginning, recognised in Jesus the Messiah who had been promised to their nation, and who left all to follow Him, an interesting question arises. Are we to think of their faith in Jesus as having been a matter of gradual development, or, on the other hand, as having been complete from the beginning? Inasmuch as all our present-day thinking is so largely determined and moulded by the category of "development" or "evolution," we should naturally be disposed to give our assent to the *first* of the alternatives as above stated. That is, we should be inclined to interpret the faith-experience of the disciples of Jesus solely in terms of *growth*. Nevertheless, there is another side to the matter. There is, of course, no question whatever as to the reality of such a thing as growth and development in regard to faith. Our confidence in a person may be strengthened and confirmed, or, on the other hand, may be weakened and at last destroyed by our experiences *with* him and *of* him. None the less, it is



true that in the various personal contacts of life, and especially as regards those with whom we are brought into closest and most intimate relation, we either *trust* a person or we *do not trust* him; our attitude is decisive, one way or the other. The husband's confidence in his wife,—the partner's reliance upon his business colleague,—the child's trust in the parent,—these attitudes of the soul, though they may differ in certain respects, yet all agree in this;—that they involve the element of self-commitment, which is the essence of faith. Moreover, while our confidence in a person, like our love for a person, may grow and deepen with the progress of the years, yet, none the less, there is such a thing as “love at first sight”;—a love which is complete and perfect from the beginning. One of the great interpreters of this Gospel of St. John, —Frédéric Godet,—has this to say in regard to that which he characterises as “the conviction of the heart”:—“This conviction *does not grow up*; it is immediate, and consequently complete, from the first moment.”<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the growth and increasing maturity of the disciples' faith in Jesus, consequent upon their three years' experience with Him and of Him, is indicated in the clearest and plainest way by their words of acknowledgment spoken during that final interview in the Upper Room. In that intimate conversation, our Lord had,—more fully than ever before,—unfolded to the disciples His mind and revealed His heart. Thus at last had been removed from their minds all that bewilderment and doubt which His words had at the first occasioned,—particularly when He had spoken of His departure

<sup>2</sup> *The Gospel of John*, Vol. I., p. viii. (from the Preface).

from them, and that by a violent death. The response of faith rises to their lips with one accord :—"Now we know that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any one question thee; *by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.*"<sup>3</sup> The disciples' faith in Jesus had undoubtedly grown deeper and clearer as a result of their three years of intimate fellowship and converse with Him. This does not, however, invalidate the fact that those same disciples had trusted Him,—trusted Him unreservedly,—from the first moment that they had followed Him. And despite the fact that they had now, at the close of His ministry, come to believe in Him with a more assured faith, yet,—as Jesus Himself warns them in that very interview, and as the immediate sequel shows,—their faith is not yet strong enough to sustain the shock of persecution. On that very night, they are to be "scattered, every one to his own"; they are to abandon their Master to His enemies. Their faith,—genuine and sincere as it was even from those first days in Galilee,—had not yet become the unshakeable conviction which inspired them after His resurrection from the dead and the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. The Resurrection removed from them, once for all, all "external" doubt and unbelief; the baptism of the Spirit fortified them from within.

The testing of St. John's own faith on that night of the arrest and the betrayal of the Master is set forth in the well-known lines of Browning :—

"Look at me, who was present from the first!  
 Ye know what things I saw; then came a test,—  
 My first,—befitting me who so had seen. . . . .

<sup>3</sup> xvi. 30.

“Forsake the Christ thou sawest transfigured! Him  
 Who trod the sea, and brought the dead to life!  
 What should wring *this* from thee?’ Ye laugh, and ask  
 ‘What wrong it?’

“Even a torchlight, and a noise;  
 The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,  
 And fear of what the Jews might do.—Just that.  
 And it is written, ‘I forsook and fled.’  
*There* was my trial,—and it ended thus.

“Ay, but my soul had gained its truth,—*could grow*.”<sup>4, 5</sup>

What Browning does not bring out, however, is the speedy return of John,—and, for that matter, of Peter also,—from this flight, and of their entry, immediately after, into the high-priest’s palace where their Master was being examined by Annas. In that palace, indeed, Peter was presently to deny Him. Surely it took courage on the part of those two men thus to expose themselves to danger in the very citadel of the enemy. Again, it is John alone who, in his narrative of the events of that night, brings out the fact that Jesus had Himself made the opportunity for the disciples to withdraw in safety. On being approached by the band of men and officers who had been sent by the Temple authorities to take Him, Jesus had twice demanded,—“Who is it that you are seeking?” And on their repeated answer that it was “Jesus of Nazareth” whom they had come to arrest, the Master had said,—“If it is *I* whom ye are seeking, then let *these*” (indicating the disciples) “go their way.” Overcome by that manifestation of power which they had just experienced when Jesus had made His first reply,—

<sup>4</sup> “A Death in the Desert.”

<sup>5</sup> I have taken the liberty of making some changes in the punctuation and arrangement of this passage, in order (as I hope) the better to bring out the poet’s meaning.

"*I am*,"<sup>6</sup>—and they, hearing that irresistible utterance of Deity, had "gone backward" and "fallen to the ground,"—the officers were ready to comply with His request, and permitted the disciples to take their departure.

Still further : it was John who, as it seems, alone among the disciples found courage, on that dark Good Friday, to stand beside the Cross of Jesus with those faithful women, "His Mother, and His Mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." It was there that John received the reward of his fidelity in having committed to him that most precious and sacred trust,—the care and guardianship of the Mother of his Lord.

As we read the Gospel story, we see faith exhibited in its various aspects and relations. We find, for example, in such a case as that of Martha, the *individual* response :—"Yea, Lord, I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, (even) he that cometh into the world."<sup>7</sup> In the case of Peter, there is the *representative* response. Speaking not only for himself, but for his brethren, Peter said in answer to the Master's question, "Will ye also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know<sup>8</sup> that thou art the

<sup>6</sup> The English translation renders these words :—"I am he,"—i.e., "I am that Jesus of Nazareth whom ye seek." The word "he," however, has no corresponding pronoun in the Greek, which simply reads,—"*Ego eimi*,"—"I am." In the light of what we have seen as to the force of this expression (see above, p. 78, footnote 2) as being equivalent to the Hebrew Name "Jehovah," can we fail to see in these words the Self-affirmation of Deity on the part of Jesus?

<sup>7</sup> xi. 27 (R.V.).

<sup>8</sup> πεπιστεύκαμεν καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν.

Christ, the Son of the living God.”<sup>9</sup> Again, in the case of the disciples in the Upper Room, there is the *corporate* response,—all speaking as with one voice; —“Now know we that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should question thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.”<sup>10</sup>

It is in the confession of Thomas that we have the fullest and completest acknowledgment of our Lord’s Divinity;—spoken by that very disciple who, at the first, had refused to believe the fact of the Resurrection, save upon the evidence of his own senses. No higher expression of faith is recorded anywhere in this Gospel, or, indeed, throughout the whole New Testament, than that of Thomas, the erstwhile doubter:—“My Lord and my God.” It is in this utterance, indeed, that St. John’s narrative finds its climax;—the closing verses of chapter xx., which immediately follow, seeming to mark the goal of the Evangelist’s endeavour:—“*Many* indeed, and *other* signs<sup>11</sup> did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye may have life in his Name.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> vi. 67—69; and see p. 67 above. The R.V., however, reads, (see p. 110 below) . . . “we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God.”

<sup>10</sup> xvi. 30.

<sup>11</sup> πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα; xx. 30.

<sup>12</sup> xx. 31. The chapter with which the Book closes,—chapter xxi.,—bears the character of an epilogue. Beginning with the (post-resurrection) appearance of Jesus to the seven disciples at the Sea of Galilee, it then recounts our Lord’s words to St. Peter in re-commissioning him as the apostolic leader and as shepherd of Christ’s flock. Finally, it narrates those words spoken by our Lord to Peter in reference to “that other disciple whom Jesus loved,”—“If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.”

On the whole, as we review the instances of faith in our Lord which are recorded in the pages of this Gospel of St. John, we cannot fail to note the *intellectual* element which runs through them all. The faith which is here depicted is not a blind faith; it is not superstition or mere credulity. There is involved in it the element of experience, as well as of reflection. We find Peter saying, for example:—"We have believed and *have come to know* that thou art the Christ." . . . Martha's faith was not a matter of hasty impulse; it was a settled conviction;—"I *have believed*." To the same effect is the testimony of the Samaritans, after they had heard by their fellow-townswoman of the presence of the great "Prophet," and had themselves learned to know Him:—"Now we believe,—not for thy speaking,—for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, as we saw in the case of the blind man whose eyes Jesus opened, there was a sturdy logic of common-sense, which prevailed over the sophistries of those who were seeking to shake his loyalty to his Deliverer:—"Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not whence he is,—and yet he hath opened mine eyes!"

These instances, and others like them, make it very evident that, from the standpoint of this Gospel, *faith* means and implies *knowledge*, as well as sure conviction. If eternal life is conditioned upon the exercise of faith (cp., for example, iii. 16, 18 and v. 24),—it is no less true that this same eternal life is identified with the knowledge of God and of His Son:—"This is life eternal;—that they may know

<sup>18</sup> iv. 42.



thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send,—(even) Jesus Christ.”<sup>14</sup>

But, on the whole, the fullest and completest response of faith on the part of any one of the disciples, or of all of them together, is to be found just precisely in the existence,—in the fact of this Gospel of St. John itself. The Book itself constitutes John’s own personal confession of faith in his Lord and Master; the Book itself is the noblest tribute to that Supreme Person that is anywhere to be found. Among all the disciples, John’s nature was the most spiritually receptive; his mind the most penetrating and profound; his spiritual vision the clearest and most comprehensive. Into this Book the “beloved disciple” has poured all the wealth of his thought, all the skill of his literary craftsmanship;—above all, the deep and ardent devotion of a passionate heart. Among all the treasures and glories of the Christian Church, this Book occupies an eminent place; its author must be acknowledged as having his rightful place among the great ones of the earth. In fine, it is John’s whole life and activity as Apostle and Evangelist that constitutes his response to the Self-revelation of the Son of God.

<sup>14</sup> xvii. 3.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE REACTION OF UNBELIEF AGAINST THE REVELATION.

THE Gospel of St. John is the Sanctuary of the Gospels. To use a colloquialism, we might almost say that it is the Gospel of the "high spots" in the ministry of Jesus. It is in regard to the *time*, *place* and *circumstance* of what our Lord is here represented as saying and doing, as well as in regard to the substance of His words and the fulness of His Self-revelation, that the uniqueness of the Fourth Gospel is seen. Moreover, it is here that the dramatic quality of this Gospel is plainly evident; as it is also in the structure and movement of the narrative.

The *place*, as we have seen, is for the most part in Jerusalem,—the capital city, where the national life was concentrated. The *time*, as we have also seen, was at the period of one or another of the great Festivals which brought to Jerusalem throngs of pilgrims, not only from all parts of the Holy Land, but from the various sections of the Roman Empire, in which so many thousands of the Jews resided.

In the light of these facts, this Gospel of John may fairly be regarded as the completion and the crown of all the Gospel narratives. Written last of all, and (no doubt) with the other three in view, it supplements them;—does not contradict them, but affords us a deeper insight into the words and works,—above all, into the Personality of Him who

is the central Figure of the Gospel story,—our Lord Jesus Christ Himself,—Son of God and Son of man.

“*The Light shineth in darkness.*” Not only does this Gospel tell us of Him who is the true Light; it tells us also of the darkness. Over against the light of *truth*, moral and spiritual, is the darkness of *sin*;—in other words, of *unbelief*,—“When he,—the Spirit of truth,—is come, he will convict the world of sin, because they believe not on me.” (Cp. xvi. 7—9.) There is the sad fact of the reaction of evil against the good; of disobedience against the truth. If we would understand, fully and clearly, how the revelation of the Light took place, and all that that revelation meant, we must not turn away our eyes from this dark side of the picture. It is, moreover, in the vivid and striking contrast between the Light and the darkness that the dramatic character of St. John’s Gospel is seen. The Light shines out the more powerfully and convincingly against the dark background of sin and evil. It is not for us, by our critical interpretation of what is here delivered to us, to endeavour to “tone down” these contrasts. What is here emphasised is the fact that unbelief in Jesus,—resistance to Him and to His claims,—is *of the essence of sin*. That is the testimony of John, and,—yet more,—it is the testimony of that Spirit who inspired him in penning this Gospel. We must, accordingly, look for a little upon the manifestations of this unbelief;—upon the painful fact of this opposition to Jesus,—to His teaching and to His claims,—on the part of the Jews. We must consider this opposition in its rise and progress, and down to its final culmination in the tragedy of His death upon the cross.

We can only survey this story very briefly;—the

story, that is, as given to us in this Gospel of St. John. As we know, the opposition to our Lord developed mainly at Jerusalem, and took its rise at the very beginning of His ministry there. First roused by His assumption of authority over the House of God in cleansing the Temple, it was intensified by His cures wrought in the Holy City, and even upon the Sabbath day. But it was stirred to the highest pitch by our Lord's fearlessly claiming, time after time, in His public discourse, to be no other than the Son of God. Some have thought,—Lord Charnwood, for example, in his recently published book, *According to St. John*,<sup>1</sup>—that there is an irreconcilable discrepancy, — or rather, contradiction, — between St. John's representation of our Lord's teaching and of its effect and that which is set forth by the Synoptic Evangelists. To this point we shall recur presently.

The sad fact which our Evangelist puts before us is, that upon our Lord's very first distinctive word,— at His very first distinctive act in Jerusalem, there is the instant reaction of opposition and of hatred on the part of certain influential persons,—to wit, the chief priests and Pharisees,—although this opposition does not as yet take the form of aggressive hostility. And what was that distinctive act of Jesus at the very beginning of His ministry in Jerusalem? It is recorded by St. John, and by him alone among the Evangelists. It was the cleansing of the Temple from the money-changers and traffickers. (It is true that the Synoptists do tell us of our Lord's cleansing the Temple. But the act of which they speak is represented as having taken place at the *end* of our Lord's ministry.—i.e., on the Monday in

<sup>1</sup> See chapter ix., and especially pp. 135—149.

Holy Week.)<sup>2</sup> But note these prophetic words spoken by our Lord on this occasion :—" Destroy this sanctuary,<sup>3</sup> and in three days I will raise it up." " But he spake," so St. John tells us,— " of the sanctuary of his *body*." The Synoptists say nothing of this prophecy of Jesus, though St. Matthew and St. Mark indirectly refer to it when they tell us how, at His trial before the high priest, our Lord was falsely accused by His enemies of having threatened to destroy the Temple.

The opposition to Jesus, first provoked by His bold act in clearing the Temple courts from the unhallowed traffic that had invaded them, broke forth in successive attempts to kill Him, and finally ripened,—under the guidance of the high priest, and through the united action of the Jewish council,—into the deliberate plan and purpose to put Him to death. In this determination, the Jewish authorities were acting (as they thought) for the safety and well-being of the nation. St. John narrates this meeting of the Sanhedrin and what was there determined concerning our Lord in the following words :—

" Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said :— ' What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.' And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them :— ' Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the

<sup>2</sup> See p. 81 above.

<sup>3</sup> τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον, ii. 19.

whole nation perish not.' And this spake he, not of himself; but being high priest that year, he *prophesied* that Jesus should die for that nation. And not for that nation only; but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.—Then from that day forth, they took counsel together for to put him to death." (Chapter xi. vss. 47—53.)

That bold challenge of our Lord's by which He virtually claimed Divine authority in and over the Temple, at once (as we have seen) aroused deep hostility against Him on the part of the Temple's official guardians. It was a clashing of His authority against theirs, and it is evident that they so understood it,—understood it perfectly clearly. But, in the shock of surprise, it seems that the chief priests did not at that time attempt to arrest Him,—to say nothing of more extreme measures. For one thing; Jesus had not at that time,—i.e., at the very beginning of His ministry,—the following which He had come to have three years later. The time was not yet ripe. But the hostility was there; the opposition was there, which was later to show itself in the demand for His death at the hands of the Roman governor.

We ask, now, what were those outstanding *acts* and *words* of Jesus which gave rise to the ever-intensifying opposition to Him and to His claims? According to St. John's account, they were the three great miracles which we have already considered. (See Chapter V., above.) We have located these three miracles in their time-sequence, by reference to the three great Feasts at (or near) which they were severally wrought.



First of these was the healing of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda. The others were the healing of the blind man and the resurrection of Lazarus. While these three miracles formed an ascending scale in the process of the Self-revelation of our Lord, they also gave occasion to an ever-intensifying hostility on the part of His enemies. The scene of this hostility was mainly in Jerusalem. But now let us turn our attention to another part of the field, and consider our Lord's reception in *Galilee*.

It was a year after the miracle at Bethesda, and another Passover drew near. It was in the spring-time, but Jesus was not in Jerusalem. In the desert, to the east of the Lake of Galilee, was wrought that great miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. Afterward, in the synagogue at Capernaum, our Lord explained to the people the spiritual fact to which that feeding bore witness;—namely, that He is Himself the true Bread of Life. The feeding upon Him, who is the Lamb of God,—the partaking of His sacrificial Flesh and Blood;—this is the spiritual reality which the Jewish Feast of the Passover symbolised, and to which it pointed forward.

It was in Galilee, and it was on the occasion of that mighty miracle that our Lord had to check the impulse which would have led the people, then and there, to crown Him as king. In Galilee; not in Jerusalem. There in Galilee it was that,—at the outset of His ministry,—even the demons had begun to acclaim Him as the “Holy One of God.” But our Lord desired not their testimony; He bade them hold their peace. And when, after that miracle of the loaves, the people were about to take Him by force and make Him King,<sup>4</sup> Jesus at once withdrew

<sup>4</sup> vi. 15.

and "departed into a mountain by himself alone." Rejoining His followers in the synagogue at Capernaum, He deliberately challenged their belief in Him by those arresting words of His about feeding them with His own Flesh and Blood. That utterance of His unmistakably conveyed the intimation that He was to be put to death,—and that, as a Sacrifice. His language could bear no other meaning than this to Jewish ears.

As a result of this deliberate challenge on the part of Jesus to the faith of His fellow-countrymen, and to their motives in following Him, from that very hour many,—indeed, the great bulk of His followers, as it appears,—“went back and walked no more with him.”<sup>5</sup> It was not spiritual hunger that had moved them; it was the fact that they “had eaten of the loaves and were filled.”<sup>6</sup> It was their desire for earthly rewards and advantages that had actuated them in their desire to make Him King. Our Lord had thus deliberately turned them back from the path of a *mistaken* discipleship. But despite the departure of the multitude, the Twelve remained faithful to Him. They still believed Him to be the Christ, even though they had seen Him reject the opportunity that had presented itself to Him of becoming “King of the Jews” in an earthly sense. It was then that, in answer to our Lord’s query, “Will ye also go away?” Peter had replied, in the name of his fellow-disciples, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed, and know, that thou art the Holy One of God.”<sup>7</sup>

It was several months later (as it would appear) that Peter again acted as spokesman for the rest in

<sup>5</sup> vi. 66.

<sup>6</sup> vi. 26.

<sup>7</sup> vi. 68, 69 (R.V.).

avowing their faith in Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus, in accepting their faith in Him, at the same time charged them not to proclaim it,<sup>8</sup> inasmuch as the danger of a mistaken discipleship on the part of the multitude was not yet over. Furthermore, after the great vision of the Transfiguration,—which seems to have taken place about six months after the feeding of the five thousand,—as they were coming down from the mount, Jesus charged the disciples,—“Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.”<sup>9</sup> That is, the proclamation of His Divine glory was not to be made until all danger of His being accepted as an *earthly* Messiah should have passed. Thus it was that our Lord forestalled any attempts which might have been made in Galilee to establish Him as a temporal and earthly King.

The conditions in Judæa, and especially in Jerusalem, however, were entirely different. Here was the stronghold of Jewish hierarchical power, as well as the seat of the Roman governor. As we have seen, Jesus, at the very outset of His ministry, had aroused the antipathy of the priesthood by His act of cleansing the Temple. He can hardly be said ever to have been very popular in the city of Jerusalem itself. It was as "Jesus of Nazareth" that He appeared there; it was by that Name that He was known to "the dwellers in Jerusalem." Any attempt, therefore, to instal Him as King in the Holy City could be likely to succeed only as an effort on the part of the pilgrims from Galilee and elsewhere who flocked into the city on the occasion of some

<sup>8</sup> Matt. xvi. 20; Mk. viii. 30; Lu. ix. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. xvii. 9; Mk. ix. 9; Lu. ix. 36.

one of the great religious festivals. It is in this light that we are to understand the demonstration of Palm Sunday. It is St. John, by the way, who in this connection tells us of the pilgrim *sojourners in Jerusalem* going forth to meet Jesus with palm branches and hosannas.<sup>10</sup> The Synoptists speak of the multitudes who were *on their way up to Jerusalem* to keep the Passover Feast. It was these multitudes who preceded and followed Him in the way who sung,—“Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the Name of the Lord.”<sup>11</sup>

In Jerusalem our Lord had fearlessly proclaimed Himself from the beginning;—but it was mainly an *individual* witness and testimony; i.e., as He appeared in His Personality, as “Son of the Father,” rather than in the context (or with the connotation) of a Kingship which might be interpreted in an earthly sense. It was in His sole and solitary Individuality that our Lord had proclaimed Himself in the Holy City, and, by that proclamation, had challenged the Jews.—In a word, it was in His Divinity that He thus presented Himself; and it was just this unconditional proclamation of His Divine claims which aroused the bitter opposition of the Jewish rulers, who denounced Him as a blasphemer.

It is this emphasis upon His Divine claims, therefore, which at once explains the apparent discrepancy (to which Lord Charnwood has called attention<sup>12</sup>) between the opposition which our Lord encountered in Jerusalem and His popularity in Galilee. In point

<sup>10</sup> xii. 12, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Mk. xi. 10; cp. Matt. xxi. 9 and Lu. xix. 37, 38.

<sup>12</sup> In chapter ix. of his *According to St. John*.

of fact, there is no contradiction here, as between the Synoptists and the author of the Fourth Gospel. For in Jerusalem our Lord was not emphasising the "Gospel of the Kingdom," as He had done in Galilee; He was emphasising His own Divine Personality. As we have already seen, it was the Gospel of the "*I am*,"—not of the "*Ye shall be*." It was the (misunderstood) Gospel of the Kingdom which explains His popularity in Galilee. It was the Gospel of His Person that aroused the bitterest hatred and opposition in Jerusalem. The one series of events is just as historical,—just as readily to be explained in its own setting and in connection with its own peculiar circumstances, as is the other. We cannot at all agree, therefore, with Lord Charnwood, in giving up the historical reliability of the narrative of St. John's Gospel,<sup>13</sup> in relation to our Lord's discourses in Jerusalem, on the ground that it presents us with quite a different picture than does the record of the Synoptists. Lord Charnwood does, however, recognise a relative distinction between the discourses of Jesus, spoken at Jerusalem, and our Lord's teachings as generally set forth by the other Evangelists:—that, namely, between the Gospel of the Person and the Gospel of the Kingdom:—"In this Gospel our Lord begins to publish His own personal claim from the very first.<sup>14</sup> . . . . In the Synoptic Gospels He came 'preaching the . . . . Kingdom of God.' . . The business in hand" (i.e.,

<sup>13</sup> *According to St. John*, pp. 141—147, and especially the sentence at the beginning of p. 146,—"Thus, so far as the Fourth Gospel here gives an impression which we cannot reconcile with the others, we cannot treat it as an historical authority."

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

in the Synoptic narrative) "is the Kingdom—not Himself."<sup>15</sup>

There is not, however, the slightest reason to doubt the historical truth of the facts as represented in St. John's Gospel, and thus to find in the clear and emphatic proclamation of His Divinity on our Lord's part the clue to the intense opposition aroused against Him among the Jews in Jerusalem. And it was their opposition which, in turn, led to His sharp criticism and judgment of themselves for their obstinacy and unbelief. This was not a case of "wrangling" as between the Jews and a spokesman of their own race,—as Lord Charnwood characterises St. John's representation of what took place. It was,—so far as our Lord is concerned,—the judgment of a Divine Being upon the ignorance and hardheartedness of men. But there is, at the same time,—as we have already pointed out,<sup>16</sup> and as Lord Charnwood also recognises,<sup>17</sup>—a Divine pathos running through the utterances of Jesus, as when He said :—" Yet a little while is the light with you. . . . While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light."<sup>18</sup>

The reaction of unbelief against the Self-revelation of Jesus is summarised in the words of the Evangelist at the beginning of his Gospel :—" He was in the world . . . and the world knew him not; he came unto his own, and his own received him not."

Faith on man's part is, and must be, an act of freedom; and for this reason it is a moral act. Unbelief, too, is an act in the moral sphere, inas-

<sup>15</sup> p. 142.

<sup>16</sup> p. 46 above.

<sup>17</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>18</sup> xii. 35, 36.



much as it also is an act of freedom. God does not *compel* man's faith; neither does the Devil, nor any power outside the man's own personality compel his unbelief. But it is an universal law in the moral sphere that an act, being repeated, tends to crystallise into a habit. So faith, on the one hand, and unbelief on the other, crystallise, through habit, into character.

It is undoubtedly true that man cannot believe without God's grace; cannot exert himself spiritually; cannot come to the light without God's help. When the Jews murmured concerning our Lord, and said,—“Is not this Jesus, whose father and mother we know? how doth he now say, I am come down out of heaven?”—Jesus said to them:—“Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me except the Father that sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”<sup>19</sup> But then our Lord immediately adds this citation from the prophets,—“They shall all be taught of God”; and then proceeds to say,—“Every one that hath heard from the Father *and hath learned*, cometh unto me.”<sup>20</sup> We know that Jesus said, on the eve of His Passion, “I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all men* unto me.” The grace of God's “drawing” is vouchsafed to all, if they will but respond to it. But where God's grace is resisted, as in the case of the Jews who refused to believe in Jesus, the act of unbelief, persisted in, becomes a habit,—difficult, if not impossible to break. Those are very solemn words of the Evangelist in his retrospect, at the end of his account of the public ministry of Christ:—

“Though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him, that the

<sup>19</sup> vi. 41—44.

<sup>20</sup> vi. 45 (R.V.).

word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake :—

‘ Lord, who hath believed our report ?

And to whom hath the arm of the LORD been revealed ? ’ ”<sup>21</sup>

This unbelief of theirs, though it was their own act, had yet been prophesied centuries before. God knows the end from the beginning. And then the Evangelist goes even further, and says,—“ For this cause *they could not believe* (οὐκ ᾔδύναντο) for that Isaiah said again :—

‘ He hath blinded their eyes, and he hardened their heart ;

Lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart,

And should turn,

And I should heal them. ’ ”<sup>22</sup>

Human unbelief is, in a sense, a mystery ; yet God’s great plan is not frustrated or turned aside by man’s disobedience. And that is a greater mystery still.

But leaving the deep problems of God’s foreknowledge and of God’s predestination,—as we found that we had to do in the case of Judas,—this fact stands out in the clearest light,—being “ witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,”—that unbelief, like faith, is a personal act ; an act for which man is himself responsible. Jesus said, in that summary of His claims which follows the account of His dealings with the Jews in Jerusalem :—

“ I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness.”

<sup>21</sup> xii. 37, 38.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 39, 40.

And then, far removed above earth's " wranglings," come these majestic words :—

" And if any man hear my sayings and keep them not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him.—The word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day."<sup>23</sup>

This fact also stands out sun-clear in the light of Revelation, that when once a man turns to God, the " blindness " and " hardness of heart " is taken away.<sup>24</sup> Jesus was indeed rejected by His nation; but we are forbidden to look upon that rejection as final, for " when the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in," we are told that " all Israel shall be saved " (Rom. xi. 26). For,—as St. Paul concludes his great argument touching the Jewish rejection and the Gentile acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Christ,—if God hath " shut up all unto disobedience," it was only that " he might have mercy upon all " (*Ibid.*, vs. 32).

But when we turn from the case of the nation to the case of the individual man or woman, it is true that man's destiny is in a real sense dependent upon his individual choice. If, then, any man persists to the end in his opposition to the light, it is upon himself that the responsibility must finally rest. One " sows an act, and reaps a habit "; he " sows a habit, and reaps a character "; he " sows a character, and reaps a destiny."

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 46—48.

<sup>24</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 16.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CONVERSATION IN THE UPPER ROOM; THE PROMISE OF THE COMFORTER; THE GREAT PRAYER OF JESUS.

IF the Fourth Gospel is the "sanctuary" of the whole Gospel history, it is in chapters xiii.—xvii. that we may discern the "sanctuary"—the "holy of holies" of the Gospel of St. John. The key-note is *love*,—as may be seen in the opening words of this section:—"Jesus" (knowing) "that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." By this conversation in the upper room, and by the manifestation of Himself which Jesus herein imparts to the apostolic band, the disciples are lifted to a higher level of spiritual consciousness than they had known before. This interview, both for its human intimacy and for its depth of spiritual revelation deserves to be characterised, as Luther has characterised it, as unique among all conversations on record in the literature of the world. By the departure of Judas the moral atmosphere has been purged, all obstacles to perfect fellowship between the Master and His disciples have been removed, and love has now opportunity freely to manifest itself. In fact, it is here and now, as never before, that the consciousness of the incipient Church is being formed as that of a fellowship of souls in communion with Jesus Christ. Although the word "Church" does not occur in this connection, nevertheless, the *fact* of the

Church finds clear expression in the figure of the Vine and the Branches (in chapter xv.). The fact which this parable reveals is not that of a mere assemblage of individuals, but of a living organism in vital union with Christ, its Head.

From the beginning of this interview, Jesus takes the disciples into His confidence, as never before. No longer are they treated as "servants"; they are now received into the status and intimate relation of *friends*. That love which is ultimately revealed as the relation eternally subsisting between the Father and the Son, here emerges into clear light as the living bond between Jesus and "His own." It is this love, moreover, which is to be the law of the intercourse of these men, each with the other; love manifesting itself in lowly and patient service. There shall be no question as to which one of these individuals is *the greatest*; as to which (in this or the other particular) *excels* the rest:—Jesus has once for all demonstrated the fact and the meaning of self-sacrificing service as the law of His kingdom. First of all,—before He speaks a word,—He gives them a silent object-lesson; He washes the disciples' feet. It is in this fashion that He, the Divine Master and Lord, is content to serve those men whom He had chosen. So they, too, are now to serve; crowns and seats of honour are reserved for the time to come. The call of the present moment, and of this life's day, is to *humility* in the spirit of Him who is about to take His way from the supper-table to the Cross.

After He has talked with them for awhile, Jesus warns the disciples that this conversation shall be brief:—"The Prince of this world" draws near; it is the hour of His enemies and of "the power of

darkness." The flow of the Master's discourse He interrupts for a moment by the abrupt summons;—"Arise, let us go hence" (xiv. 31). Yet they are not to depart at once; the conversation is still prolonged. While there is an intimation of the approaching separation, there is to be no word of farewell. Jesus still continues His discourse, unfolding yet more clearly and fully the great truths of His spiritual kingdom.

It is during this latter part of His Discourse that the note of warning is repeatedly struck;—warning, that is, of the opposition and even persecution which is in store for the disciples. For "the servant is not greater than his lord; if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." The fact remains that the love which prevails within the fellowship of Jesus has as its counterfoil the hatred of the world outside,—not only for the Master Himself, but also for His true followers. Jesus speaks plainly and emphatically of this opposition on the part of the world, and of its consequences. While in this present time tribulation awaits them, yet in and through all these trials and conflicts shall flow the unbroken current of that peace which is the outcome of their Master's victory over the world.

Accompanying these words concerning the fellowship of Jesus and its law of service, of sacrifice and of witness-bearing to Christ, now comes the great promise of the Motive-power which is to support and carry them forward. This is no other than the "Comforter";—the Holy Spirit, through whose coming the disciples shall have Jesus Himself once more and for ever present with them. It is thus that their witness to Christ is to be borne,—the Spirit meanwhile ever witnessing with and through



them. It is thus that the "fruit" of the disciples,—as of living branches of the Vine,—shall abound; it is thus that their fruit shall "remain." Nay, the accomplishment of the disciples shall even exceed what has hitherto been the accomplishment of Jesus Himself; for the reason that He, going to the Father, shall obtain for them this Power Divine; this Power which, in its personal manifestation, is to be recognised as the Paraclete,—the *alter ego* of Christ. Moreover, the disciples are now to make request of the Father freely, in Jesus' Name. Through Him, they are henceforward to have free and immediate access to Him who is "greater than all."

And in this latter connection occur those remarkable words whose significance is, I think, frequently overlooked:—"I say not unto you that *I* will make request of the Father<sup>1</sup> for you; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God" (xvi. 26, 27). Can these words convey anything less or other than this,—that Jesus, the disciples' Sponsor and Advocate, having introduced them into the sanctuary of the Father's presence, so to speak, retires and leaves them alone with the Father? In other words:—the relation of the disciples to the Father is to be so direct, so immediate, that it may be paralleled with the relation which subsists between the Father and Jesus Himself. No intermediary between the disciples and Him who is the supreme Object of their love and worship. And yet, it is the Master Himself who is all the time the Ground and pre-supposition of this relation, thus to be established between the disciples and God the Father. For upon what basis

<sup>1</sup> See R.V. (marg.).

is it that the Father does, in fact, love these men? What is the immediate occasion of this "love" of which Jesus is speaking? It is for the reason that the disciples are in moral and spiritual union with Christ; it is "because they have loved (Him) and have believed that (He) came out from God." It is in that *faith and love directed to Jesus* that the disciples are to find their sole and all-sufficient ground of standing before Him who is the Holy and the Eternal One.

And now at length the disciples confess, as with one accord, their faith in Jesus. No longer, as at the first, do we meet with such anxious questionings as those of Thomas, or of Philip, or of Judas (not Iscariot). Doubt and anxiety have, for the moment at least, vanished, while the disciples say, as with one voice,—“Now speakest thou plainly,—no longer in ‘parable’ or ‘dark saying.’” Now we know that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee,—(as by way of testing Thy wisdom or authority). “By this we believe that thou camest forth from God” (xvi. 29, 30). Jesus has unveiled His mind and His inmost thought to those whom He has called His “*friends*.” He has made good the assurance conveyed by that precious word. No longer do “parables,” like veils, concealing what at the same time they reveal, interpose between the disciples and the Object of their faith. It is the final response of faith to the Revelation and to Him who has thus revealed Himself.

And now follows, in chapter xvii., that wonderful intercessory prayer,—so sublime, yet so simple,—in

<sup>2</sup> *παροιμια.*

which we may see the climax of that Self-revelation of the Son of God who is also the Son of Man. Jesus offers Himself and His finished work to the Father who has sent Him, and to whom He now returns. He intercedes for the disciples that they, who still are to remain for a while in the world, may be kept from the evil, and may be so united in love,—both with the Father and the Son, and also with one another,—that even the world itself shall ultimately come to believe upon Jesus as the Son of God.

Of this prayer of Jesus,—the divinest of all prayers,—one can only say that in its depths and heights it is beyond the grasp of finite apprehension; yet Christ's "little ones" can penetrate its meaning and be lifted up, as on eagles' wings, by the power of its intercession. We are raised to those heights where Jesus is beheld in the glory which, from eternity, He enjoyed with the Father; and in this glory *we are made to share*. The unutterable wealth and splendour of this gift we can but dimly apprehend. It is "the unsearchable riches of Christ" which His chosen ones shall be exploring and enjoying,—yes, and themselves shall be manifesting unto "the ages of the ages," "world without end." It is the "beatific vision," which is also beatific *service*; the consummation of human destiny, in and through Jesus Christ.

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